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FUTSAL TACTICS BECOMING SOCCER TACTICS

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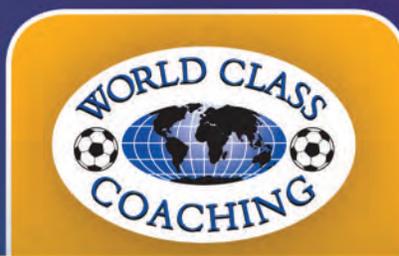


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Football Tactical Systems which may have come from a Futsal background

- **Brazilian Box Midfield 4-2-2-2/4-2-3-1**
- **Barcelona's 4-2-4-0/4-3-3-0/4-1-2-1-2**
- **Man City's 4-4-2/4-3-1-2/4-2-3-1**

The Traditional Brazilian Box Midfield

(4-2-2-2)

Brazil traditionally have played a 4-4-2 with 2 holding and 2 attacking midfielders, and 2 attacking full backs, effectively having 6 in defence, and 6 in attack, with a solid central base for transitions to attack or defence.

This has always worked well for Brazil, as they have a well-balanced group of players across the country – flair based attacking midfielders play against hard men central midfielders, and clinical strikers play against defenders who defend first and have the ability to launch counter attacks into their own fast, reactionary strikers who know how to drag open spaces for the attacking midfielders to exploit, in a very flexible attacking shape.

The 2-2 attack in Futsal is one that has a multitude of variations that can transfer to the 4-2-2-2;

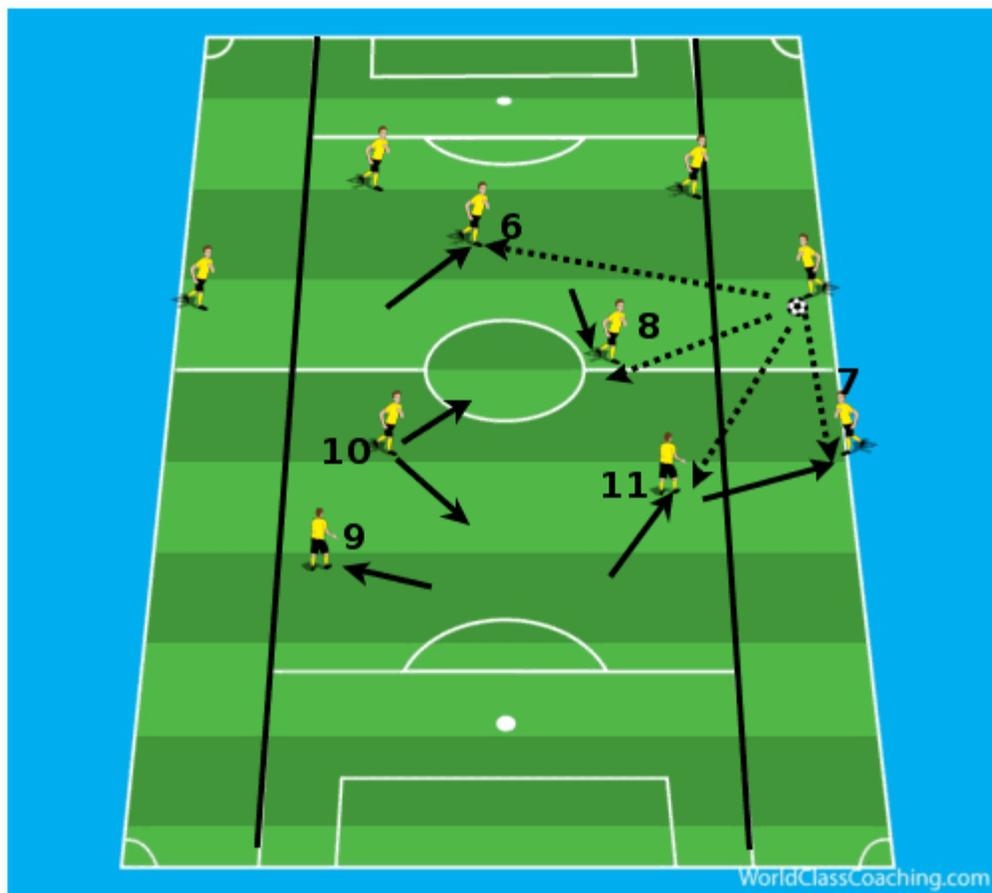
- A fixed base of 2 staying deep and 2 attacking players
- A fixed deep player who doesn't rotate forward and builds play from deep
- A fixed forward player who doesn't rotate to build play from deep
- A 'windmill' pattern where the players rotate on opposite sides from each other
- A 'circle' pattern where all players rotate one way together, changing the angle of each pass
- A horizontal rotation where all players on the same side change positions
- A butterfly rotation where each player moves diagonally to attack or drop deep



Normally, the Brazilian midfield that has a structure will ask that the number 10 has lots of central space possibly for a 2nd line forward pass, so one striker will play wide and short on the side of the ball for a 3rd line forward pass, the other wide on the far side to offer a diagonal pass which stretches the defensive shape, while the near side attacking midfielder will move wide to offer a wide short pass on the touchline, while the number 10 assesses the space but generally will try to play between the lines and offer a triangle with 11 and 9 and look for a 3rd man run if there is a possibility to penetrate quickly.

The full backs will move up, creating an overload on the side of the ball, while the 2 defensive midfielders will work on a see-saw motion, up high to offer a 1st line forward pass, the other drops deep to offer a pass back to build the attack from deep and allow the centre backs to push forward.

Example of the pass back to 6 to build the play from deep



As the forward passes weren't available, the pass back to 6 was taken, which means that players will now start to rotate as the ball is in a central position. 9 will pull wide, 10 will assess his options – if 11 is deep, 10 will go forward, although if the centre of midfield is equal ie 2v2, 10 will drop deep to create the overload of 3v2, meaning 7 will make the run into the zone 11 started in before he dropped short to offer the 3rd line forward pass to attack the back 4 or combine with 7 on the side.

Example of the passing lanes for number 7 and the movements off the ball around him



As 6 receives, 8 has stayed in position to offer support, while 9 has dropped into a position between the lines for a 2nd line forward pass, while 11 does the same on the far side. This means that 10 will offer a 3rd line forward pass as 7 sprints to offer a pass over the defence or push back the back 4.

Both centre backs have split wide and offer wide passes, allowing the full backs to push forward, especially on the far side which can stretch the play with a long diagonal pass.

If we were to look at this in a Futsal context, the movements off the ball to offer penetration are from wide positions, to run on the blind side, while the central movements are to link the play with quick passes, to draw the opponent in and release the pass to find the runner in the wide position.

Example – number 9 receives in midfield diagonally from 6.



As 9 receives in the position originally taken by 10 at the start of the move, 11 and 7 have rotated – 7 has dropped back while 11 has moved forward to offer a diagonal pass behind the defence, which with the rotation with number 7, would disrupt marking strategy when players move between the lines as freely as this example shows. Number 10 will drop in to offer a short pass, which would be curved wide into 2 behind the defence, but makes a 2nd run when 9 has time to assess his options and this run would offer a pass between full back and centre back, but also to push back the defensive line.

In the Brazilian Box midfield, the formation can easily switch from 4-2-2-2 to 4-2-3-1, and morph into a different Futsal attacking formation, 3-1. Alternatively, it could also move to 4-2-1-2-1, depending on the positions of the players between the lines and how deep the number 7 or 10 plays to help the 2 deepest midfielders.

The positioning of the attackers is not formation dependent in Futsal, and is a mixture of set rotations practiced like set pieces until the players are comfortable and happy to break an opponent down in any scenario. The players of the front 4 in the 4-2-2-2/4-2-3-1/4-2-1-3/4-2-1-2-1 need to have confidence from the coach to allow them to play with their own intuition and creativity to find a way to break down the defence. It should be noted that 4 players covering the width of the field in a diamond, 3-1 or 2-2 is very difficult, so the full backs should be

encouraged to fill these positions and act as outballs or wall passes to allow the rotation of the front 4 in the middle of the field where the opponent will be uncomfortable with the movement of the players between the opponents.

Example of the 4-2-2-2 becoming a 4-2-3-1



Here, the full back is in possession in a wide position, with 10, 7, 11 and 9 all occupying central zone positions. This means that the runs they make will have less distance, and therefore less energy consuming, and more effective when moving defenders around the mark, then pass on between players on the same line, or indeed on different lines. When number 7 drops deep to help make a central midfield triangle, 9, 10 or 11 will have more space to use, although against a low block, they may have more players to deal with and less support to make intricate combinations with.

Commonly in modern football, we may see the wide and central players rotating, so that the wide player who is now in a central position can make a diagonal centre-wide run behind the full back as he presses the ball, which can either bring the centre back wider and disrupt the defensive shape, or bring a central midfielder with him, disrupting the protection in front of the defence. Either way, it's a good run to make as it causes problems from the defence, and gets the winger in a position to cross, albeit from making a diagonal run onto a straight pass behind the full back instead of the traditional straight run into a diagonal pass.

Again, it must be stressed that the players need to practice as a group of 4 to learn each other's movement patterns, how to make, find and use the spaces made, how to rotate, how to circulate

possession, how to penetrate and how to then counter-press as a group to regain possession, as a game can be controlled with and without possession.

Futsal is a game like basketball where set 'patterns' or routines will be laid out by the coach, but a lot of the game is players looking at how to make space, or use to use the space created by someone else, looking at where defenders are moving to and anticipating play ahead of the game.

What could the coach do to find new ways to use the Brazilian 4-4-2?

When developing a 4-2-2-2, it is important that the coach and the players use some imagination to find ways to draw the opposition out of position, open up spaces, disrupt marking schemes and find different ways of having the front 4 rotate positions.

Also, the coach can allow the deepest 2 players to rotate with the attacking players, although this would mean 6 players in central positions changing, which may leave the team unbalanced, especially if possession is lost – you could have a striker and attacking midfielder protecting the defence, with both defensive midfielders being the ones closest to goal in attacking positions – not the guys who would be expected to score goals!

There is even the possibility that if the 2 strikers drop deep and wide with the attacking midfielders, the formation can become a 4-0 attack (4-in-a-line), meaning that the possibility to stretch the defence horizontally will be made by the 2 full backs, creating the famous Barcelona bowl attack shape, with Abidal and Alves wide, Messi, Pedro, Villa and Iniesta spread across the width of the box, to try and draw opponents out and look for 1-2s or 3rd man runs behind the defence, as I will show in the next section.

The players should be free to move around, and the shape can change from 4-2/2-4 with the attacking structure of 3-1, 1-3, 1-2-1, 2-2 or possibly even a 2-1-1 formation depending on the rotational patterns the team can practice to find ways to be difficult to defend against.

In Futsal, the 1-3 formation is considered suicidal, as it would be too direct and leave you open to counter attacks with overloaded scenarios, so I would advise against using this in Futsal to help develop your attacking system – maybe a 4-2-1-3 (4-3-3 with a number 10), would work correctly in terms of numbers, but in terms of practicing it in Futsal, it wouldn't work.

The coach must at all times come up with a system that suits the players profiles to have success, and over time, add layers to the attacking and defensive system to allow the system to evolve and stay unpredictable, which is one of the many benefits of using a Brazilian 4-4-2, or 4-2-2-2.

Alternatively, the Brazilian box midfield can be modified, and be turned into a 4-2-3-1, with a narrow attacking midfielder, with a wide attacking midfielder, often creating a 4v3 overload in central midfield, with one of the strikers mobile enough to operate in the wide area that the space the attacking midfielder who came inside normally would start in before moving inside.

Obviously, with this being an attacking system, the coach must find a compensating mechanism for the team so that goals aren't easily conceded, so when the 4-2-2-2 is used and adapted to suit the needs of the players, the defence can cope. Obviously with 2 holding midfielders, this can allow for flexibility ie the centre back moving wide to cover the full back as a holding midfielder drops into centre back, while the other holding midfielder screening the defence.

Barcelona and Messi as the False 9

(2-3-2-1-2)

For me, this Barcelona team, with the style of play and tactical variations in each game, to exploit the opponents weaknesses and nullify their strengths, was the best team in the history of the game. They had the smallest average height and weight in European football, but overcame this 'weakness' by moving the ball around and changing positions so quickly and fluidly, that they were almost unplayable in the time between 2009-2011.

One of the reasons for this, was the fluidity of the attack, and the use of Messi in a 'false 9' position. Although not a new tactical invention, a team playing a 4-3-3 formation would normally utilise a centre forward who could lead the attack – Barcelona bought Zlatan Ibrahimovic to offer them a plan B for when teams played with 2 or 3 compact lines with minimal central space to pass or dribble through – but Messi's performances in the false 9 role meant that both players would struggle to play in the same role effectively and Zlatan was sold to AC Milan after only 1 season.

Guardiola's use of Futsal and Basketball movements in both attack and defense, especially the high counter-pressing tactic and use of crossover runs to drag away and exploit opponents, were so difficult to play against that Barcelona were an incredible sight in the time Guardiola was manager.

Barcelona Shape in attack 4-1-2-1-2 when Messi drops deep to overload the midfield



Barcelona always built up play from the back, and would often see the centre backs split to the width of the touchline, pushing the full backs on and Messi dropping deep, leaving the centre backs of the opposition spare, giving Barcelona 11 v 8 to build possession from deep.

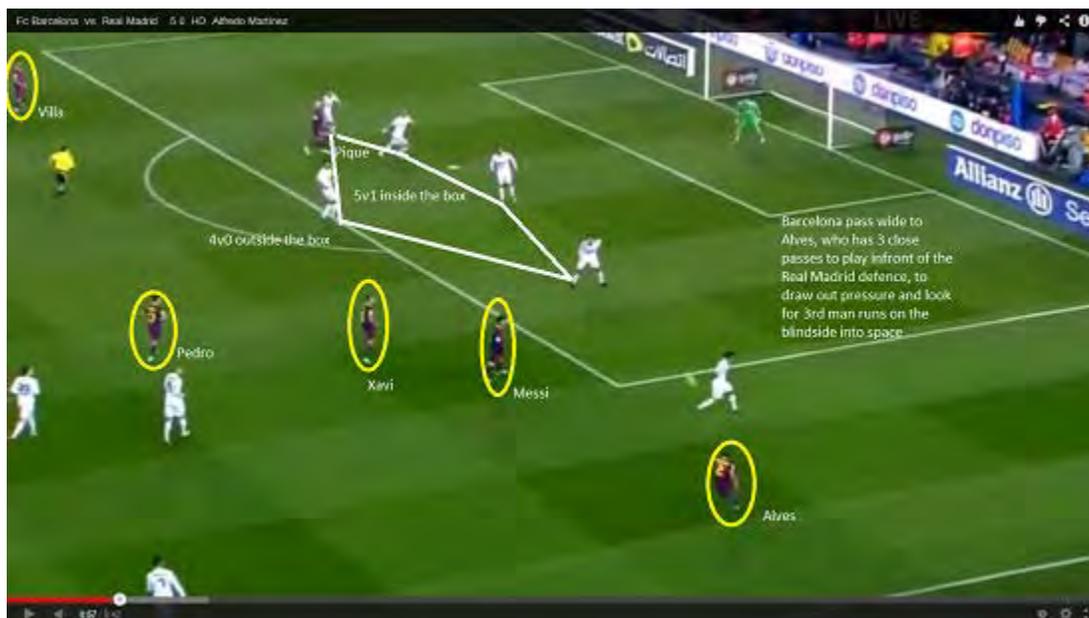
Barcelona in the opponent half – the ‘bowl’ attack (2-2-6) with a 4-0 central attack



As Messi was used as a false 9, Pedro and Villa had to make runs to offer penetration behind the defensive line for when Messi, Xavi or Iniesta were in possession in central areas. To rebalance the attack, Abidal and Alves would push forward and occupy the wide positions, giving Barcelona a bowl shape across the field, which was used to play between the lines and draw out opponents.

When the opponents didn't mark between the lines, or block the passing lanes into the players positioned in this space, Barcelona were happy to stand still until certain attacking triggers were made, for example, if the ball was wide, and was passed inside and back, this was to draw the defence to bring the defensive line higher. This trigger was activated by a player between the lines making the run behind the defensive line with a 3rd man run, and was very effective in early games against Real Madrid who had no answer to the movement and play between the lines of the Barcelona attack.

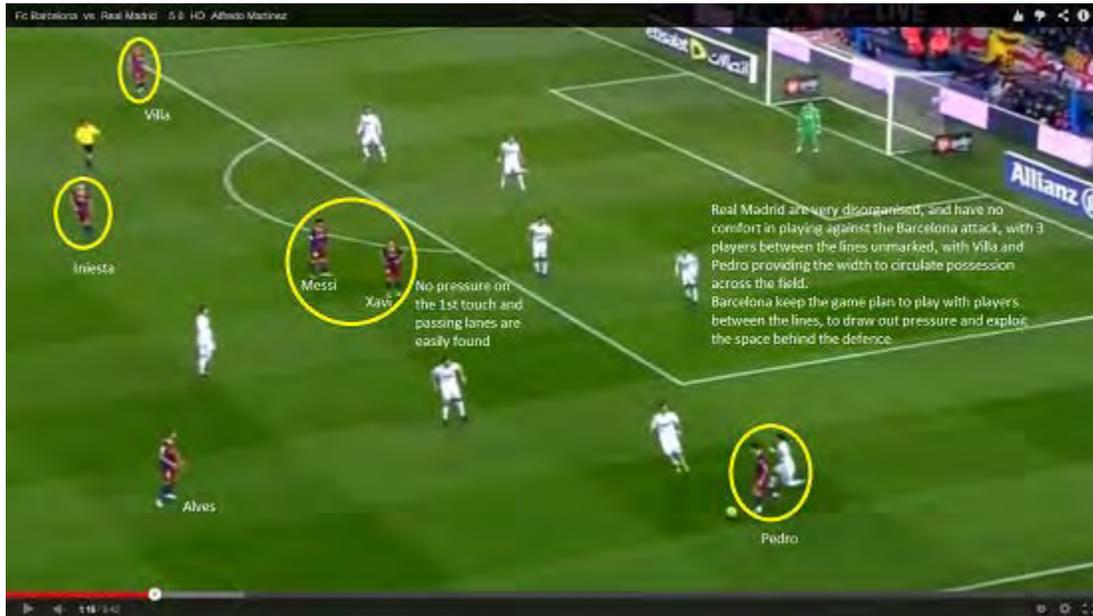
Alves in the wide position chooses the wrong option



Here, we can see that Barcelona have 5 players between the lines, with no marking or line compression from Real Madrid. Alves crosses when he could easily find Messi or Xavi who would be pressed and trigger the 3rd man run from deep.

Madrid have a 5v1 inside the box, but 0v4 outside of the box, meaning that in this 6v6 scenario here, Barcelona have opportunity to create a scoring chance from this position

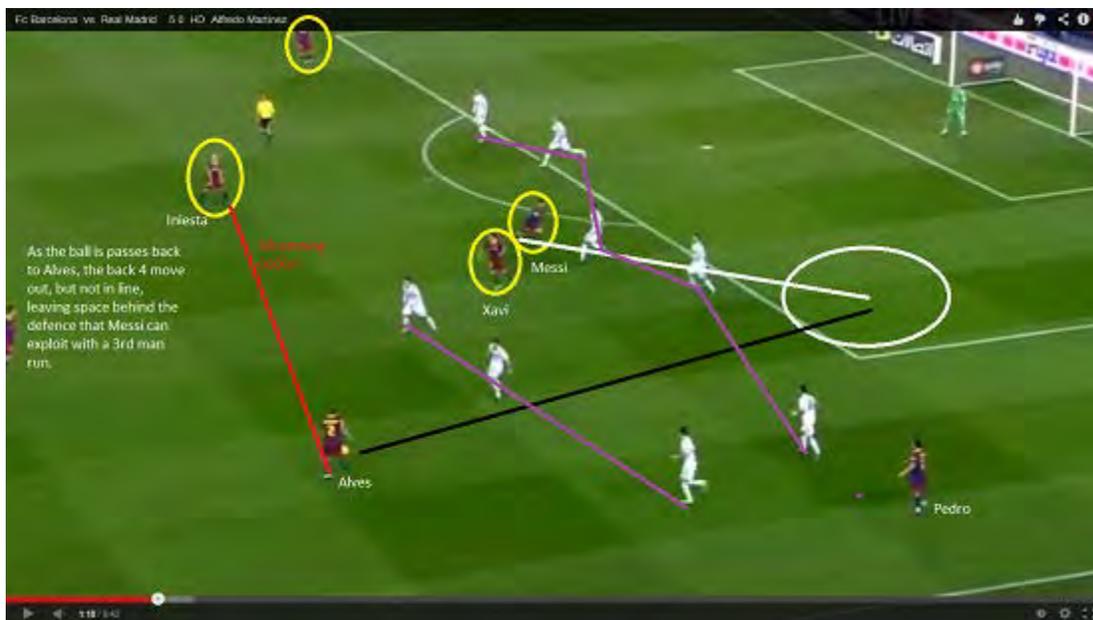
Pedro and Alves change positions, Messi and Xavi look for 3rd man runs from between the lines



Here, Pedro is pressed and passes back to Alves. This is obvious to Real Madrid so the defence move up, but this triggers the movement from Xavi to drop short and Messi to run behind the defence.

Madrid's positioning here is all over the place, showing their discomfort at the Barcelona attack.

Alves finds the pass into Messi's 3rd man run



As the ball is passed back, the direct pass into the feet of Xavi is blocked, but the passing lane behind the defence is open, so Alves chooses the most attacking pass which is his preferred option. Alternatively, Iniesta is in position to receive away from the pressure and make a 2v2 on the far side.

If Iniesta was to receive from Alves, Messi would likely arc around to provide a lateral passing option as Xavi would look to make the diagonal run behind the pressure placed on Iniesta.

The players have almost total freedom of movement, but within a heavily zonal structure with set routines and rotations based on the position of the ball, the player on the ball and the position of the defenders and where the spaces are and/or are likely to appear.

Barcelona's diagonal runs to change the position of attack – Free Messi and Iniesta



In this attacking rotation, Messi and Iniesta are the players who create, while Pedro and Villa look to penetrate with runs from wide to centre for the passes from Messi and Iniesta, specifically Messi to Villa from right centre, and Iniesta to Pedro from left centre.

Again, Alves and Abidal will push forward as the attack almost becomes a Brazilian box midfield (the 4-2-2-2 or Brazilian 4-4-2), so that Barcelona can pass wide to start the attack again and keep the attack rotating.

When the wide-central runs are made, the idea is to draw in the full backs close to the centre backs, resulting in the centre forwards being placed in 1v2 scenarios, freeing up other players (ideally Messi and Iniesta), but also it pushes back the defensive line as the players look for the penetrating pass behind the defence, stopping the 1v2 overload from being effective.

Again, if Messi or Iniesta move inside with the ball, If Pedro or Villa find that they cannot receive the final pass, they will arc back around into wide positions and re-stretch the defence. Generally, Abidal will stay wide, as Villa occupies the far side centre back or full back from his inside left position, while Alves has more freedom to move inside as Pedro will move wide to recreate the width.

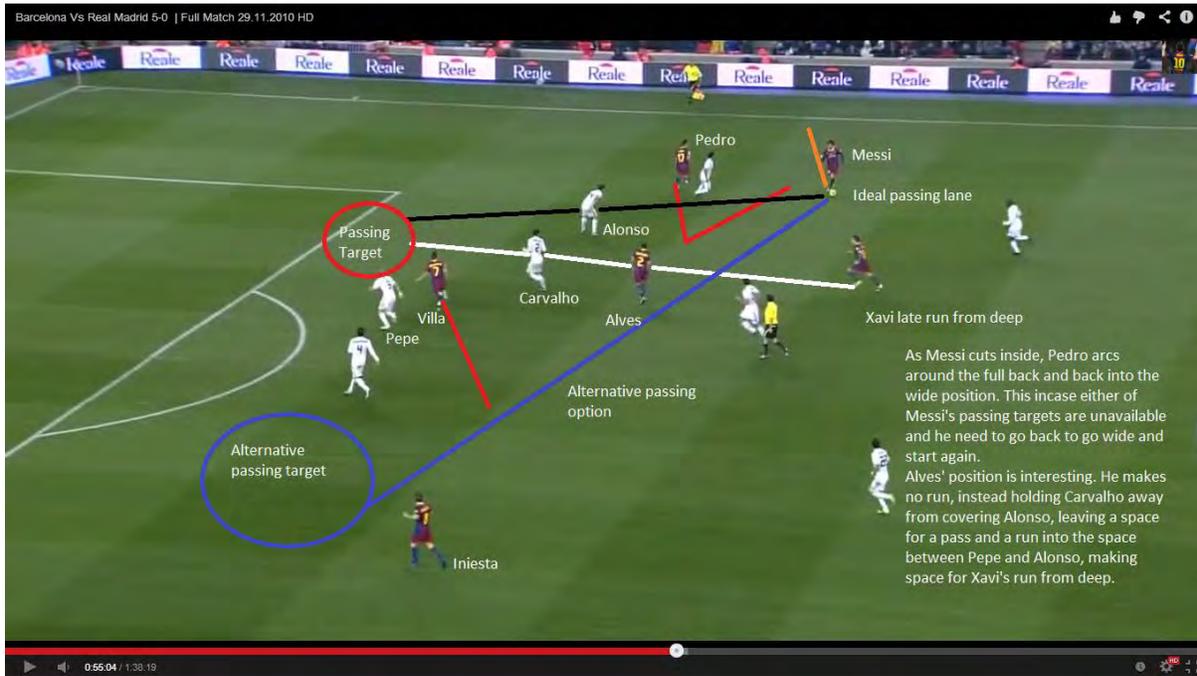
Xavi has an interesting role in this system, he can make late runs from deep if he can exploit the spaces left by defenders coming out to press/mark between the lines, while Busquets will stay behind of the midfield triangle to recycle play, but again, due to the rotational nature of the system, Busquets will ensure that He, Xavi, Iniesta are all on different lines, both horizontally and vertically.

Pedro and Villa moves inside to free both Messi and Iniesta



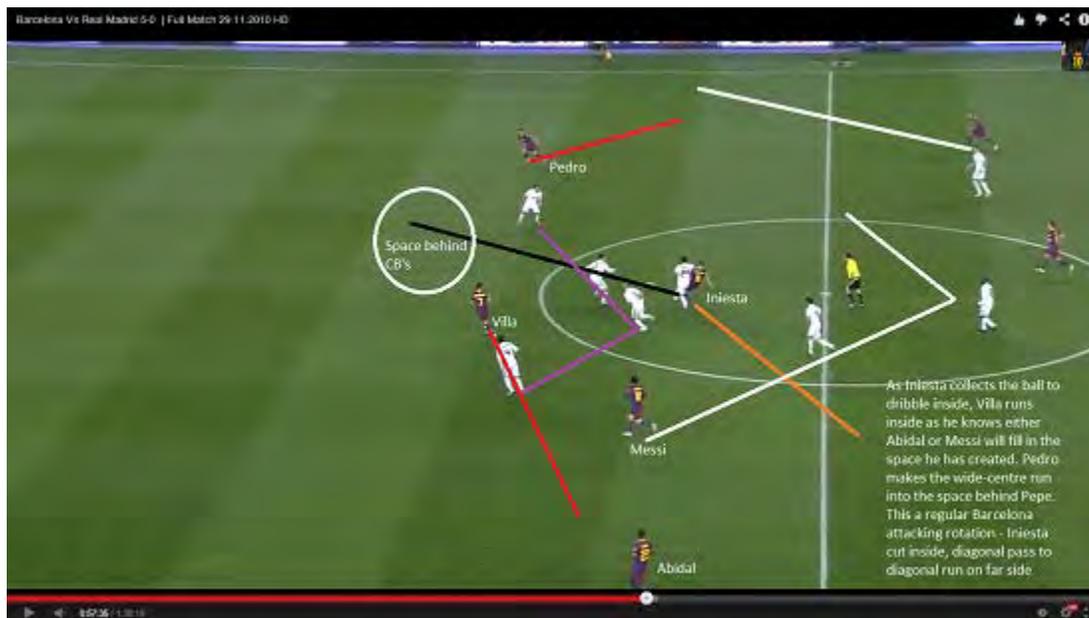
Xavi has the ball in central midfield after a rondo on the right side has been used to drop play back to Busquets, who finds Xavi. As the ball was switched, both Alves and Pedro have sprinted inside, while Messi has drifted wide. This means that Pedro and Alves have taken away the two players who would stay close to Messi if he is in the wide position, Marcelo and Alonso, with Diarra covering from behind. Now that Xavi touches wide where the ball has come from, Messi is free with Villa and Pedro occupying the back 4, with Iniesta free on the far side as Busquets is again protecting the defence.

Messi is free to look for a killer pass from the channel – Barcelona Pattern Of Play



As Messi cuts inside, he has 3 clear options, a pass into the feet of Alves, a pass behind the defence into the run of Villa, or a switch pass into Iniesta who is free on the far side. Xavi arrives late.

Iniesta cuts inside to find the diagonal pass into the diagonal run of Pedro – Pattern of Play



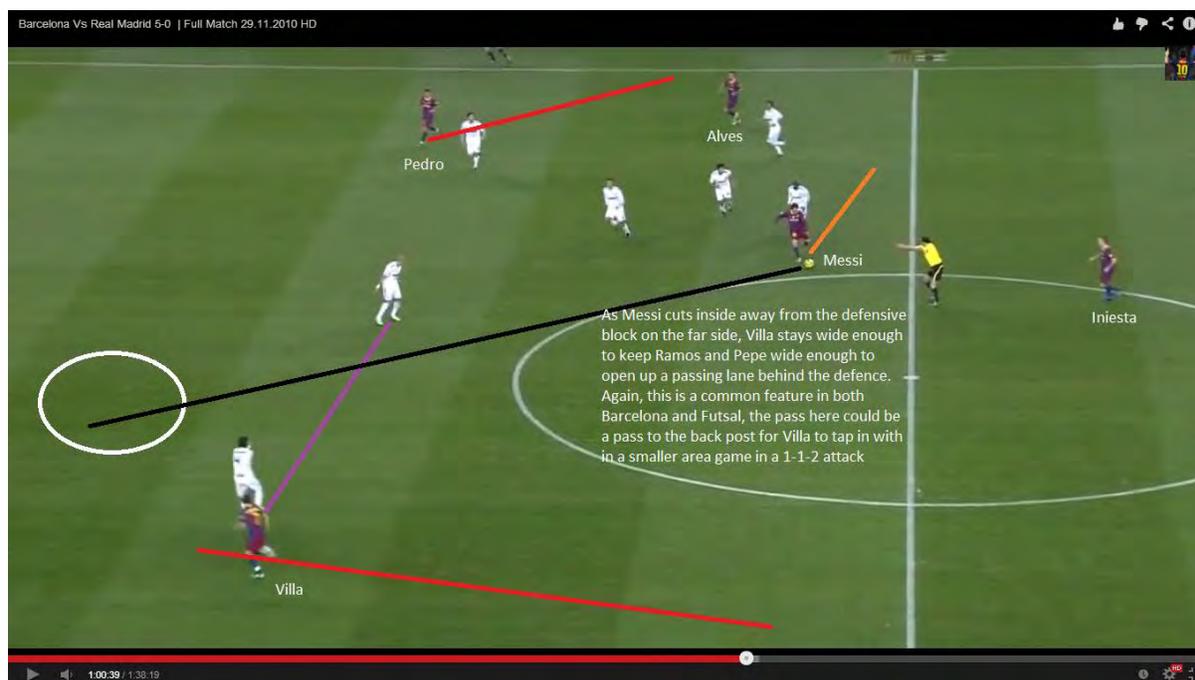
As Iniesta receives, he has Pedro and Villa in wide positions, who will both run diagonally inside. As they do this, Messi knows to drift wide of Iniesta to occupy the space created by Villa on the left. As Iniesta cuts inside, this is Pedro's trigger to sprint wide of the full back as the centre backs come out to press Iniesta; this creates the space for the pass behind the defence and into the stride of Pedro.

Messi is free to cut inside to find Villa – Pattern of Play



This time, Pedro has drifted wide and Messi has stayed in the false 9 position, while Villa makes the same wide to centre diagonal run. Messi dribbles inside and draws out Carvalho, who opens up the space for the pass into Villa as he comes out to press Messi. Villa makes two runs here, his 1st run is directly to Pepe's blindside, then into the passing lane that Messi can see.

Messi is released by Pedro and Alves to cut inside then find the killer pass



Again, Messi has drifted wide, then as the pressure arrives, Pedro and Alves help to take away the pressure from Messi who can cut inside. As he cuts away from his opponents, there is a clear diagonal passing lane into the run of Villa who has stayed wide as Iniesta is too deep to release into the wide position, so he keeps the centre free to offer penetration for himself from Messi.

What can we decipher from the Barcelona Attacking Rotations?

We can see there is obviously a high level of pre-planned actions, but to perform these movements so fluidly under high pressure, is a consequence of having a Futsal background as a youth player. Although some of the actions are pre-planned and obviously very well-rehearsed, it takes intuition and creativity to be able to know exactly what runs to make, what passes to make and when to deliver it.

The ability to play in small groups of 4 is effectively down to how well players can read and react to the movements and intentions of the opponents and team mates, and move as a group to work as a team in tight spaces. Playing Futsal at youth level will give them players the chance to learn this scenario independently, which will stay with them for the rest of their playing careers.

Could we work on these 'slant' runs during Futsal sessions? Absolutely. It would take a while for some players to learn the exact timing of when to run wide as the central run is made, with the body at what angle, but as it can be practiced regularly in game scenarios, it wouldn't take long for the players to work out how/when to stand still and when to make the run with the body at the best angle to receive and attack, knowing where the support is from their team mates to help make the final pass.

Developing the 'Barcelona Bowl' Attack

In the Barcelona 'false 9' system, I can often become a 4-1-5, 4-6-0 or even a 3-7-0 (as Santos Manager Mauricy Ramalho called it), as the main CF is Messi, who drops off between the lines. Without penetration, this system can become rigid and with little threat, so the coach has to ensure that players are willing to make forward runs, especially on the blindside and 3rd or 4th man, which will disrupt the defence, open up spaces and allow for penetration.

Simple Bowl Layout using Barcelona as the example



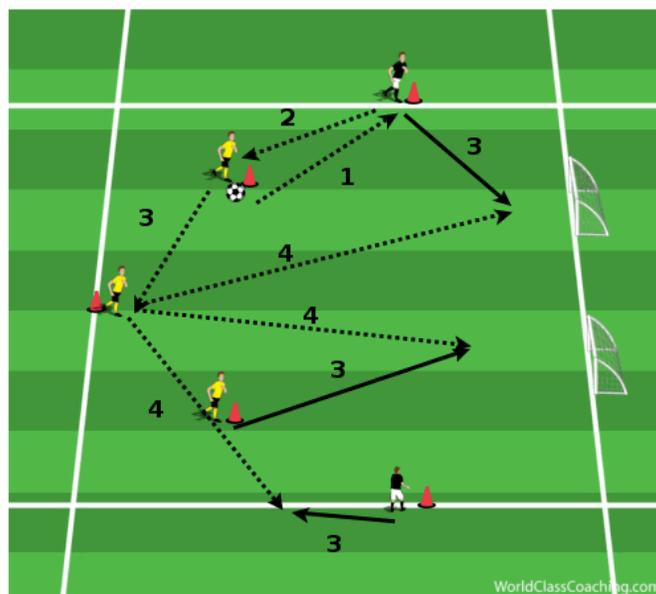
When we organise to use a 'bowl' attack, we can use it in 2 areas; To get behind the midfield line, or behind the defensive line. Here, we can see the zone we want to find someone in behind the midfield line, although this can also be used to find a through ball behind a back 4.

The similarities from this formation to the Barcelona formation are obvious – the deepest player in Futsal would have no direct opponent (the CB in 11v11) while the wide players were the most advanced, creating a bowl across the field and stretching the defence, opening central space and allowing for players to make diagonal runs into the spaces between the lines.

When we see Messi drop deep, there are a lot of 1-2s played, sometimes double 1-2s (Messi-Iniesta-Messi-Iniesta Messi scores v Villarreal) which cuts through a defence who are unable to move or press as the ball is continually changing direction with movement into space created. One of the problems of using this system means that a high level of creativity, technical ability and movement off the ball is needed to succeed, but is an incredible way to teach young players how to move off the ball into dangerous positions, to circulate possession effectively and to time runs and forward passes at the correct angle, weight and into which foot of the receiver.

Developing the Bowl Attack

Passing sequence to work on exploiting the central space by having no CF

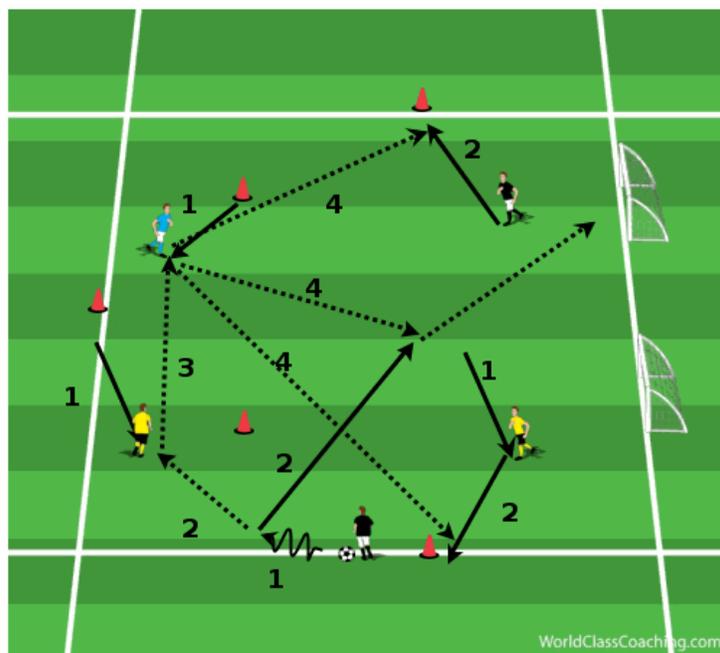


Routine: Iniesta passes to Villa (black players shift inside to outside diagonally) who returns to Iniesta. This is to move the defenders and open up space. The next pass inside is to place Villa on the blindside, to offer a possible diagonal pass behind the line. Alternatively, there could be too many defenders in the way, so Messi could make the diagonal run on the other side, offering a pass between/behind the line, which would either narrow up the midfield and free Alves on the touchline, or penetrate into the target space.

Coaching Points:

- Look to make 3rd man diagonal runs to receive diagonal inside passes
- Play quickly and circulate from side-side when forward passes aren't available
- Time the run and weight the pass to allow quick forward play which hurts the opposition
- Play double passes to give team mates time to get into position
- Wide player can dribble inside to open up the space for the wide-centre-wide rotation

What can you do if there is no way through initially?



If there is no way through in the 1st attempt, then the ball should be re-circulated. Xavi and Iniesta should shift over to cover the spaces in case the ball is lost, when there should be instant counter-pressure from losing possession. Villa (black) should drift wide again and leave the space open. Messi will drift wide as Alves dribbles inside then into the space after the pass inside to Xavi.

Routine: Alves dribbles inside, passes to Xavi, who passes across to Iniesta. Iniesta can pass diagonally to Alves who moves between/behind the line, as Messi fills in the wide space. If Iniesta can't make that pass, he keeps circulating the ball wide to Villa, where Xavi could make the diagonal run into the space from the blindside.

Key Coaching Points:

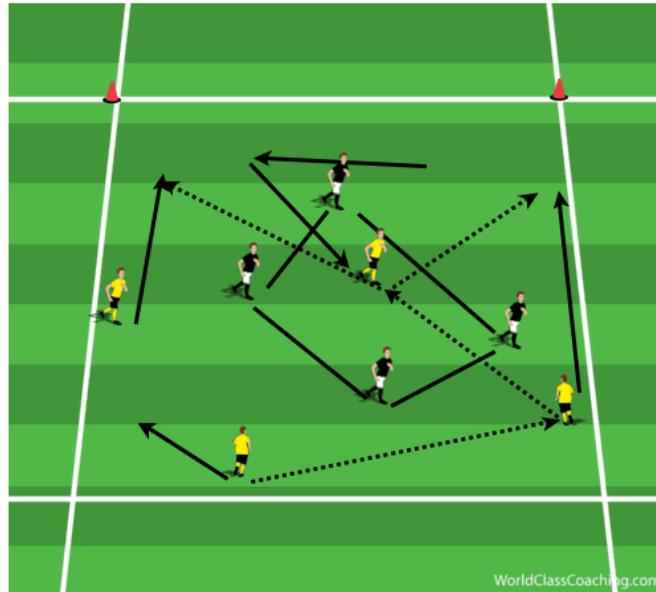
- Play 3rd man whenever possible
- Blindside diagonal runs are hard to track
- Weight and timing of the pass into the run
- Make it able to be received and used in the stride of the runner
- Awareness of where the space is, and will be after movements

How to develop:

- Play initially against an offside line to develop the timing and fluidity
- Play 5v5 with 3 zones – bowl in zones 1&2 with runs into zone 3 where the defence are
- Add in a midfield line of 3,4 or 5 players
- Play against a midfield with defensive offside line with 3 extra passes
- Add in Midfield and Defence with a GK

Positional exploitation as a false 9 – Between the lines and Half Spaces

Playing between the lines in a 4v4



In this practice, we play a 4v4 end line game. What we are looking to do is to have the 'striker' keep moving but try to receive between the 4 players, then find a runner behind the defence, or dribble 1v1 and attack the space.

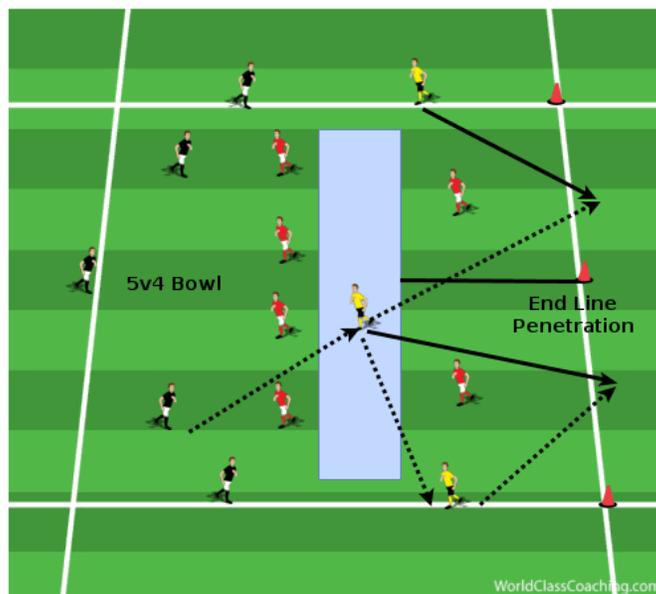
Coaching Points:

- Look to open passing lanes between opponents
- Play diagonally whenever possible
- The striker should be free to drop deep and lose his marker to create an overload
- Look to play between the lines as often as possible

Progressions/Variations:

- Play 4v4 + GK
- Play 4v4 with 2 small target goals
- Play 4v4 with 3 small target goals to go through before playing into the GK
- Split the field into 4 horizontal zones, 'false 9' drops deep to receive, turn & play forward

Dropping into the space between the lines



Mark out a playing area with a 'free zone' for the false 9 to play horizontally across, between the lines. Behind the false 9 are two 1v1 boxes, where the false 9 must either look for a through ball, a 1v1 dribble or a 1-2 combination to get across the end line.

While he moves across the zone to receive, his team mates will play in a bowl formation with a 5v4 overload, with the defence trying to stop passes into the false 9.

If the 4 win possession, they must counter attack across the end line.

Coaching Points:

- Be patient in possession, use the width to circulate and tease the opposition to press
- If the false 9 receives, he should do on the half turn, and be decisive to attack at speed
- The 'wide attackers' in the 1v1 boxes should move behind the check runs to lose marker to offer a pass or drift wide to create space for the false 9 to dribble, or offer a pass behind
- The 5 players in the bowl should try to disrupt the defensive line by making diagonal runs into the space behind the defence, offering 2 passes forward between the lines

Progressions/Variations:

- Add in goals, if the defence win possession, shoot! The 'Bowl' must press to stop the shot
- Add in another 2 defenders – the closest CB should press the false 9 and delay the attack
- Play with a target man and centre back – the 4 midfielders can pass and support while the 5 defenders stop the forward pass or shot

Playing in 'Half Spaces'



The 'half space' is the space between wide midfielder and central midfielder or full back and centre back, which is often a neglected zone defensively and where lots of goals can come from. Using a false 9 in this position opens up lots of central space which other players can exploit.

In this game, the False 9 and attacking midfielder try to get into the half spaces and receive passes between the lines, then look for penetrating opportunities by 3rd man runs.

Coaching Points:

- The false 9 and attacking midfielder should look to occupy the half space as often as possible
- Look to penetrate forward when 360 degrees of support is available to penetrate or retain
- Time runs forward or when dropping deep to receive
- Communication to indicate when and where the pass should be played to
- Timing of forward run and recognition of where the passing lane is
- Occupy the half space to draw in full backs to release the wide players
- Look for diagonal passes out of the half space

Progressions/Variations:

- Add in 3 small goals to counter attack into or through to the large goal
- Make it mandatory for 2 players to be between the lines
- The ball must go through a half space between the lines before a goal can be scored
- False 9 must assist via a through ball from half space zone

The half space is a very small area, but the rewards for getting the ball into the space and back out into the space of where the pressure came from; behind the CB or FB preferably, then attack the spaces after the pass. Players who are comfortable playing quickly to an ever changing environment, like futsal, will be able to use these spaces effectively – players like Messi, Luis Suarez, David Silva, Santi Cazorla, Mesut Ozil, Andres Iniesta, Xavi, Marco Reus, Thomas Muller and Sergio Aguerro.

Manchester City attacking under Pellegrini (4-2-2-2)

Manuel Pellegrini successfully employed a similar system with Villarreal, with a slightly different set up, as he had Juan Roman Riquelme as his playmaker, rather than in this system where there is no real playmaker, although there is more fluidity and a focus on getting the ball into the strikers with support from deep running midfielders. The system is a mix of 4-2-2-2, 4-2-3-1, a flat 4-4-2 and an advanced 4-1-3-2, depending on the opposition. Yaya Toure will move forward to support, Aguero will move deep, while Negredo tends to stay forward and stretch the defence vertically as Navas and Nasri/Silva stretch the play horizontally, making the field wide, which helps exploit the pace and mobility of the Man City players.



As we can see from the diagram, City will attempt to create a lopsided diamond from centre to left, as they stretch the play on the right via Navas. This is down to having Silva and Nasri who like to tuck in and play between the lines. When Silva plays from the right, Navas is required to play on the left and provide a different problem (penetration play) from the problems Silva/Nasri cause (playing in the 'half spaces', combination play and overloading centrally)

Clichy or Kolarov will normally overlap on the left and provide some width, as will Zabaleta, although Clichy can be found slightly higher than Zabaleta, especially when Navas is on the same side as Zabaleta, who has more of a balancing role in the attacking phase, while Clichy needs to open play wide on the left to take away an opposition player from the inverted winger.

Overall, this is a very fluid and modern tactic, taken from a traditional South American system (a type of Brazilian box midfield of 4-2-2-2) but adapted for modern football, especially when Yaya Toure breaks forward from central midfield to help the attack from deep.

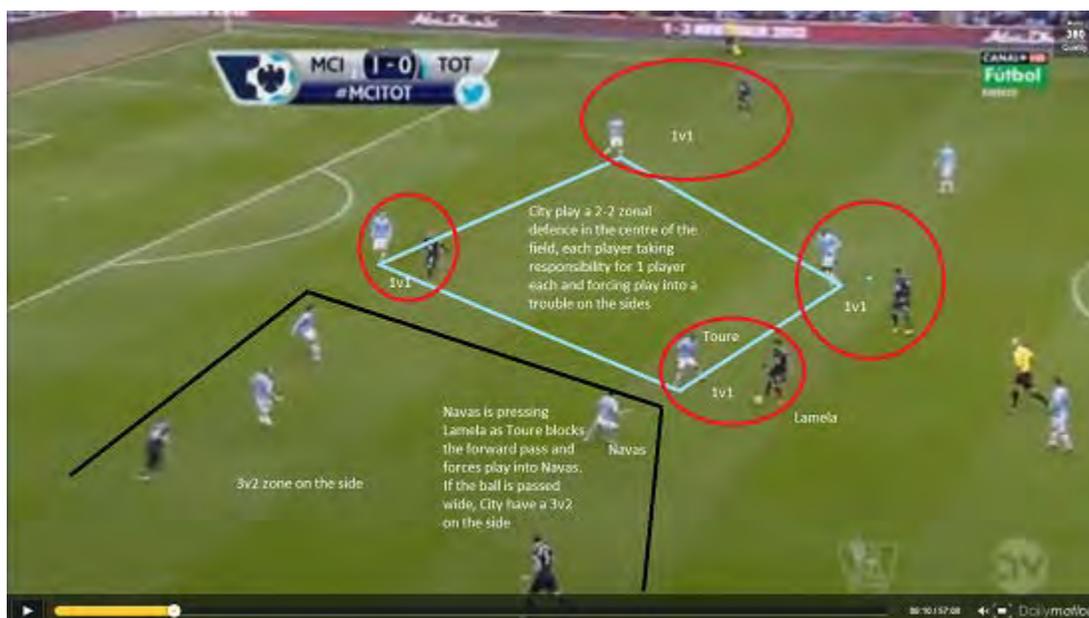
Sometimes, Pellegrini will change the system to play 4-2-3-1 with Silva, Aguero and Nasri changing positions as the central attacking midfielder, Aguero playing left if Nasri is central, with Silva drifting inside from the right. This changes the dynamic as they can often have 5 midfield in a 2-3 pentagon with an outball on the sides via the advanced full backs and on the same line as Aguero/Negredo/Dzeko as the centre forward



Defensively, they play 4-4-2 or 4-4-1-1 with the idea of forcing play wide and overloading on the sides where they can often find themselves 3v2, especially on the right as Navas/Milner track back.

When the ball is on the side, the near side centre back will move over to help overload the zone if the far side full back has tucked in enough. This would be a risk if the player in possession had a target at the back post to find and enough time to shift the ball and strike it 40m to the back post, but Pellegrini doesn't see this as too much of a threat given the regularity that Demichelis or Kompany shift over to help the full back, as Fernandinho/Javi Garcia or Toure shift over to win the ball back on the wide area.

Man City defending as a 2-2 to force play into trouble



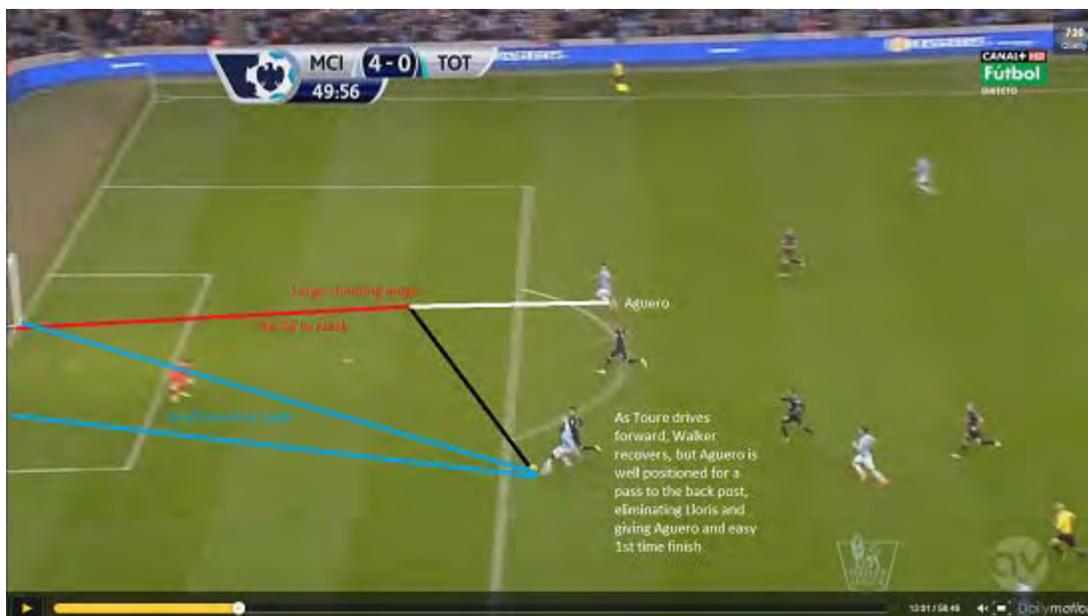
Tottenham have tried to cut inside from the left, but as they look for a way across the field, the 4v4 they have created means that any pass will be challenged by a City defender, with 4x 1v1s in the red circles. Note Toure's body shape, he is forcing Lamela back out towards the touchline, but also into the pressure from Navas. Even if Lamela avoids Navas and passes wide, City will have a 3v2 inside the wide zone. If Lamela moves over to help, so will Toure or Aguero (next to the referee).

The set-up of the 4 players circled is to demonstrate the need for players to be positioned well enough to discourage certain actions from happening, but also to take responsibility in 1v1 scenarios, especially when there is a likelihood of little support available.

Negredo's 'Roll and Release' creates a goal

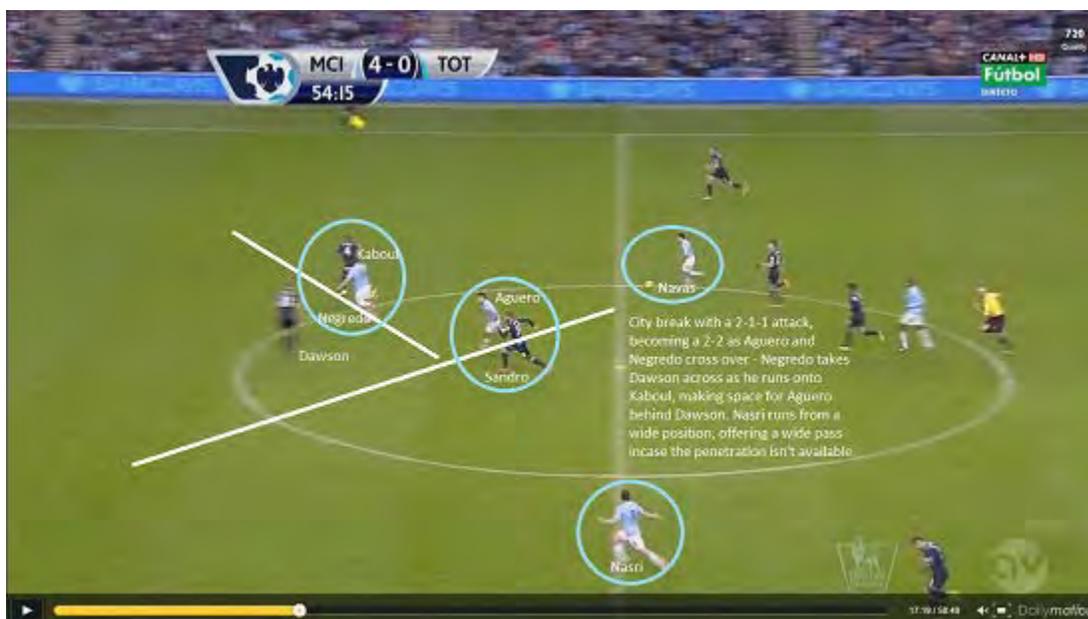


Here, Toure has passed into Negredo positioned between the lines, which entices Dawson to sprint out to press the ball. As he does this, he takes instant control with the sole of the foot and allows him to roll the ball into a releasing position before moving the ball into the path of Toure.



Toure sprints to goal, and under pressure he makes a very common Futsal decision – pass to the back post and eliminate the goalkeeper.

Diagonal slanted runs from centre to channel – 2-1-1 to 2-2 attack

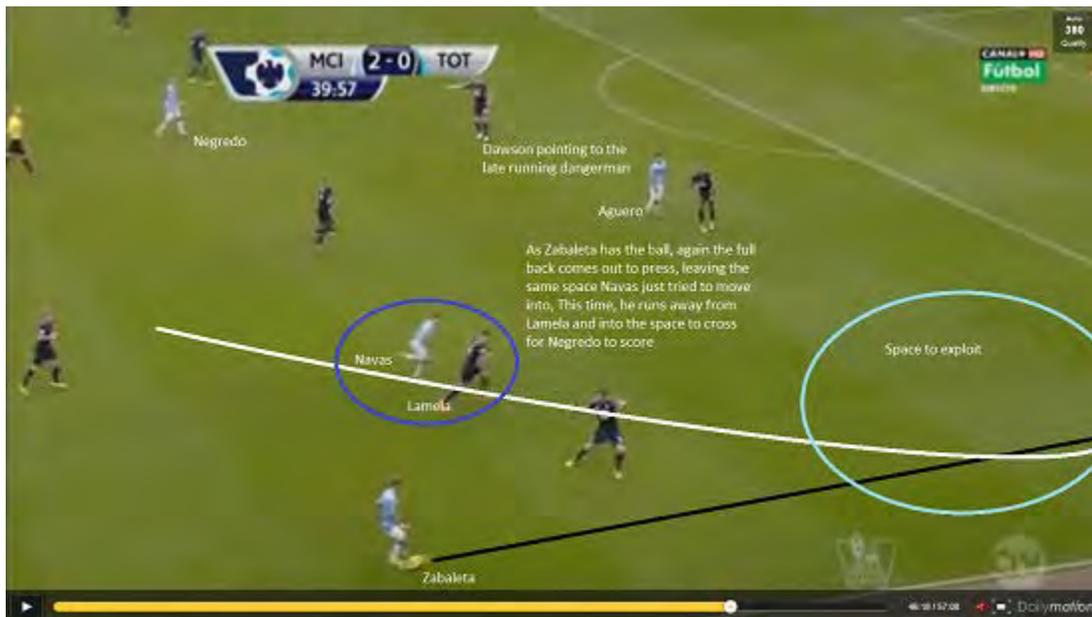


On the counter attack, Agüero and Negredo have taken up central positions, with Navas and Nasri both wide and deep. Toure is supporting the attack from deep to make a 3-1-1 formation, leaving Fernandinho to protect the defence.

As Navas breaks forward, Negredo runs right, while Agüero runs to the left. The reason Agüero is able to run free on the left is down to Negredo taking Dawson a few yards to the side, closer

to Kaboul, as Kaboul wants to close down Negredo's space, where Dawson should follow Negredo, but Dawson delays as he knows that Aguero will be free as Sandro won't be able to catch him if he is put through on goal. Nasri stays wide to open up the field and attack down the left if the pass into Aguero isn't possible. The pass to Negredo wouldn't be the best one, as he is being tracked by 2 players and may lose possession, so the 1v0 scenario will always be the ideal choice.

Diagonal 'central winger' run from centre to wide area



As we can see from both of these images, City like to make regular diagonal runs when the full back is in an advanced position. As Lamela tracks Nasri, this opens up a large hole centrally,

which allows Zabaleta to move inside with the ball, and attack the space with Nasri still available wide. If nobody tracks the run, the pass down the line leaves the runner in a 1v0 on the side, unless the centre back comes out of position which is good for the attack. If a central midfielder tracks the run, this leaves spaces at the edge of the box and allows for cutbacks.

As Lamela tracks the run, the space opened up centrally can allow 2 or 3 players to drop in and allow for more positional rotation and movement into unsighted spaces if the ball is moved quickly.

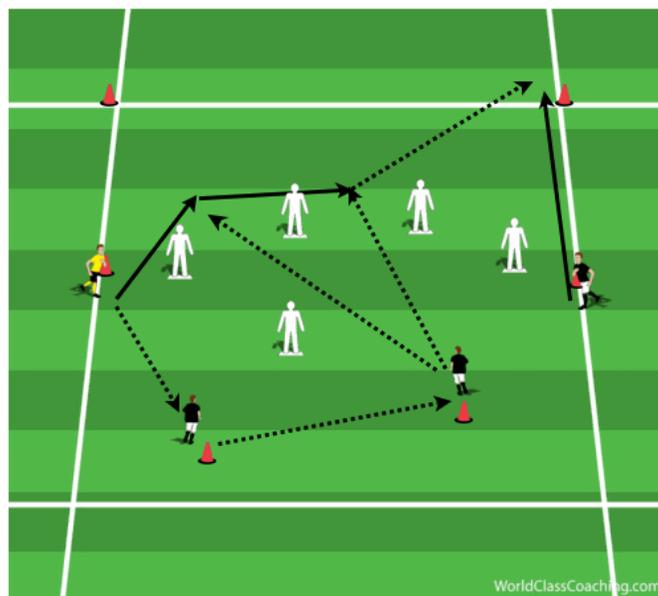
Attacking like Manchester City

Wide player drifts inside practices

A large part of the 4-2-2-2/4-3-1-2/4-2-3-1 that Manchester City use is the movement from wide-centre that is common from both David Silva and Samir Nasri, especially to offer penetration behind the midfield.

In these practices, we want to encourage players to move inside and know when is a good time to run or stand in space, ready to receive.

Pass Selection to Penetrate twice



Set up an area with a 4-1 midfield with mannequins – you could use 4-2 or 5-3 if you like to make it slightly harder to ensure that players have open passing and receiving lanes from midfield to attack.

Silva (Yellow) will pass back then move inside, as the ball is transferred across the field. Silva's role is to make sure the passing lane is open, and that the next pass can be played within 2 touches into the run of the winger on the far side behind the offside line.

Coaching Points:

- Timing and speed of the run to drift into space – a slow jog could be a ‘stealth run’ while a sprint would be an ‘evasive run’. The difference being that a stealth run may not alert the defence to the run, while a sprint will likely be noticed and tracked
- The stealth run will be easier to pick out and receive with the next pass already decided
- The next player – the winger – needs to decide when to start running to receive behind the offside line

Progressions/Variations:

- Add in a goal on each side 20m behind the offside line to practice the wide are finishing
- Add in a back 4 who would press Silva as the ball is passed into him between the lines & CA
- Remove the mannequins and have 2/3/4/5 pressing players – add in supporting players

Zonal Game - Silva and Nasri drifting between the lines from wide areas (4-4-2 to 4-2-3-1)



Set up an area across midfield with 3 zones as above. The idea is to get Nasri (Red) or Silva (Blue) to overload centrally, while Aguero (Orange) can drop and offer penetration behind the midfield or even to move into the zone and help make a bigger overload. In wide areas, Silva/Nasri and the near side central midfielder to overload 2v1 or 3v2 in that wide zone. They must initiate the attack!

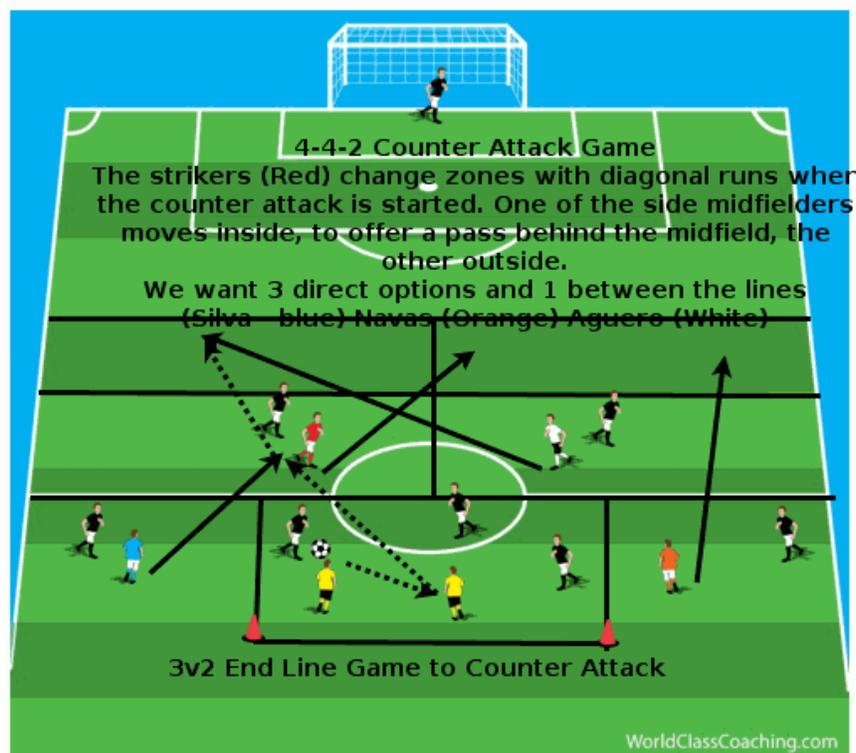
Coaching Points:

- Silva and Nasri have freedom to choose the positions they take up to get through midfield
- Aguero can drop deep and be free in his position but needs to support the attack quickly
- Look for diagonal passing lanes to pass through midfield and release the full backs
- Move the ball quickly
- Press in transition

Progressions/Variations:

- Add in counter attack goals behind the midfield line so the defending team can score
- Place a GK and large goal 20m behind the zones for quick shooting opportunities
- Add in 2 covering players who can re-circulate possession and defend in transition
- Nasri, Silva and Aguero must all touch the ball before a goal is scored

Counter Attack Game – Wide Midfielder moves inside



The blacks start with a 3v2 breakout game – they must cross the end line then go on to attack 3v2 with the wide players helping to play 5v2 against the defence and GK – the wide players (Blue and Orange) and central midfielders work as recovering defenders to make a 6v5 and stop the attack.

If the 2 win possession, they start a counter attack. The 2 strikers must change sides when the ball is won and make diagonal runs to lose their markers. One of the wide midfielders will offer a short passing option with a diagonal run inside to where the strikers started then try to play 3v2 and score quickly. The far side player will offer a longer outball incase neither of the strikers are able to receive and go direct to goal if possible, with the other wide midfielder supporting for a cutback.

Coaching Points:

- Fast forward pass to beat the counter-pressure
- Anticipate early to move inside
- Recognise where to run and where the space will open up
- Look for penetration early on the counter attack

Progressions/Variations:

- A shot must be made once the ball exits the starting box within 8 seconds
- No more than 5 passes before a shot is made

- Wide midfielder who moves inside can only play with 3 touches maximum
- The player who wins possession must join the attack
- Play against or with different formations ie 3-4-3/4-3-3 (3v2/3v3 in starting box still)

Barcelona v Real Madrid

Attacking and Defending Scenarios

As both of these teams use Futsal scenarios on a regular basis in games (Most of the players are Spanish and have a Futsal background at youth level), I think it would be good to show how both teams may attack or defend against each other in the same match.

Common Futsal scenarios in attack that Barcelona use are in evidence in this game, attacking with the 4-in-a-line formation (False 9 attacking from deep) (4-0 Futsal Attack), playing between the lines, and playing in groups of 4 or 5 on the side, and almost always with a rotation of positions.

Playing between the lines, and attacking the final 3rd with a 4-in-a-line attacking formation



Xavi receives in a deep position with an option to pass on either side with Messi becoming the 4th player in the attack as the ball is passed to Busquets.

Why is the ball passed to Busquets? It opens up Messi, Real Madrid have less players on this side of the field and Xavi can move between the lines in Messi's line of vision. Alternatively, Messi doesn't need to turn back inside and could have instead passed wide to Alves on the touchline, or behind the defence as there is a passing lane between Messi and the space behind the defence.



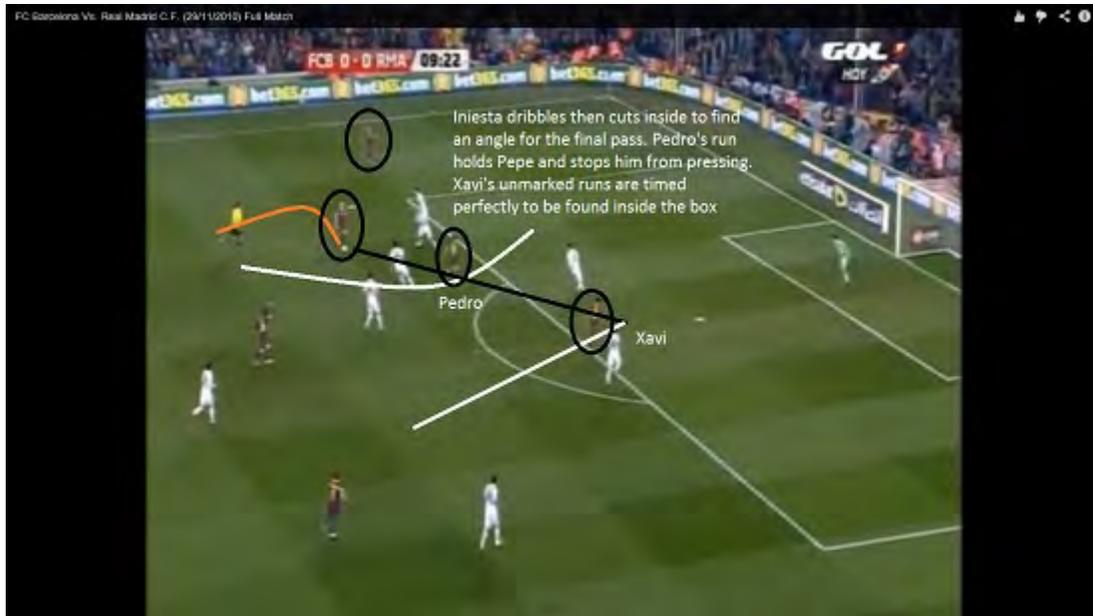
Messi passes infield to Xavi who is between the lines with no immediate pressure. He plays a 1-2 with Xavi and takes over in a central position. Iniesta's positioning between players and between the lines offers the next pass from Messi as Xavi occupies the centre forward zone after his pass.



As Messi finds Iniesta, a common Futsal 4-in-a-line scenario opens up (all circled black). Pepe moves out with Pedro as it looks like he will receive the pass; Pedro leaves it for its target, Iniesta.

The offensive position 4-0 is one of the most used in Futsal, your main goal is to make defense in line and advance it and pull it out of its defensive position to create space for the backs and take advantage of those spaces, also using the back door. This position must be accompanied

by and based on short, quick movements with and without the ball and combinative actions or quick passes, alternating short and long, to regain possession and take advantage of the space that has been created.



As Iniesta dribbles forward, Madrid back off to avoid easy penetration, but Pedro's run from deep stops Pepe from pressing, opening up for a short time, a passing lane to Xavi inside the box.

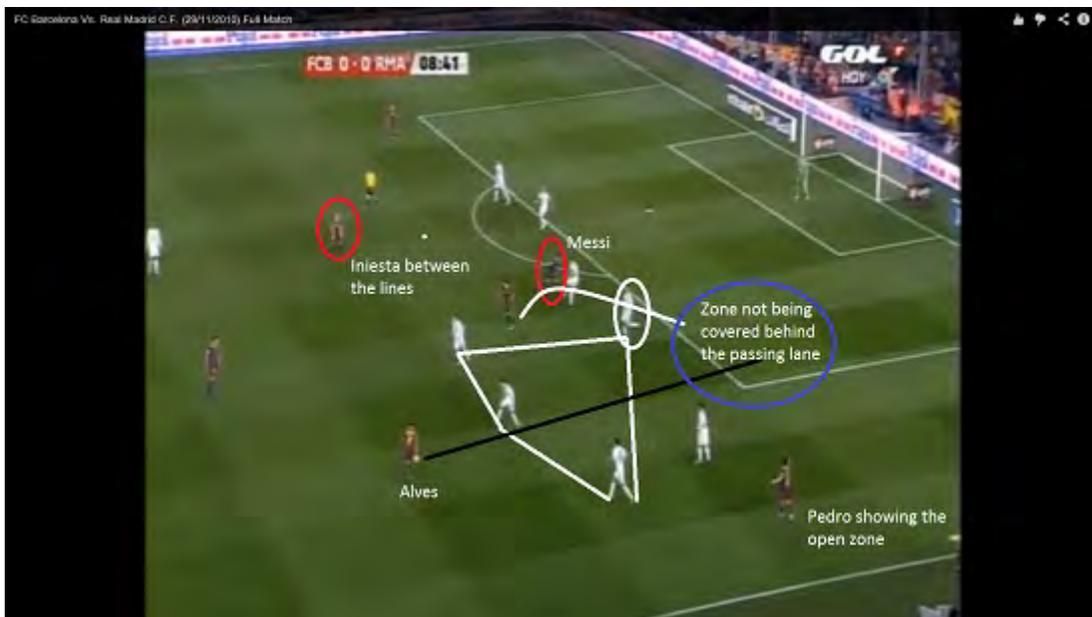
Xavi and Iniesta's positioning between the lines ensured that they could be able to receive the ball, while the 4-in-a-line formation has made marking very difficult as Iniesta cuts inside – he has 3 options – outside to Villa, Inside to Pedro or across to Xavi, which was chosen as he could score.

Breaking down a pressing line

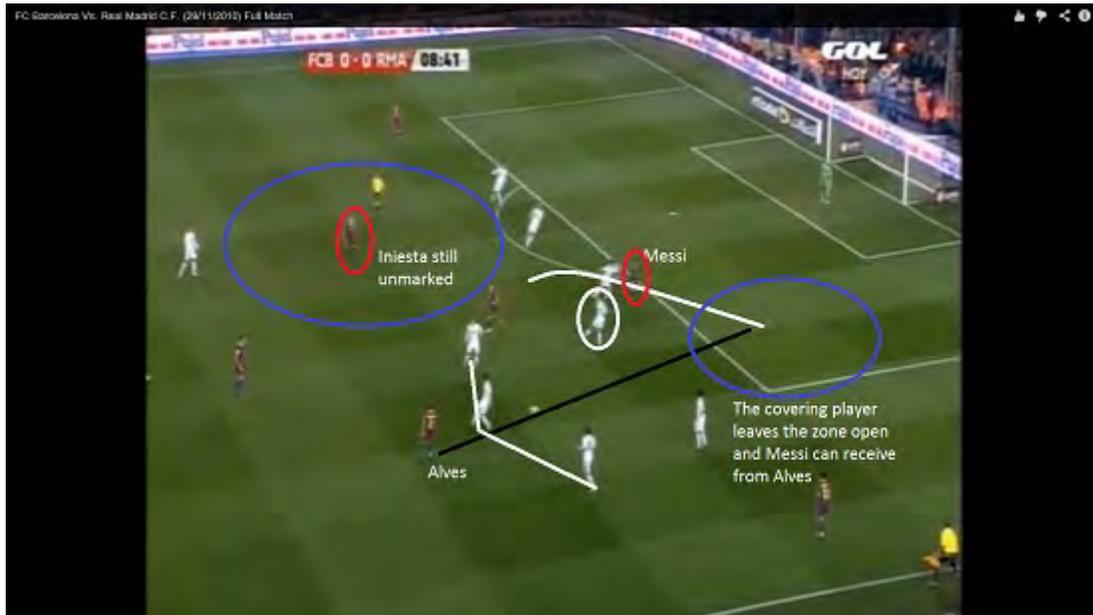


As Pedro has the ball in a side position and is under pressure, he uses Alves to retain possession, who is in the common 'playmaker' role in Futsal. He has Messi (circled red), playing next to Xavi who has dropped off from the zone occupied by the covering defender (circled white).

Again the position of the players of Barcelona make defense uncomfortable and Madrid feels misplaced. Many Barcelona players are too free despite being in a dangerous position on the edge of the area.



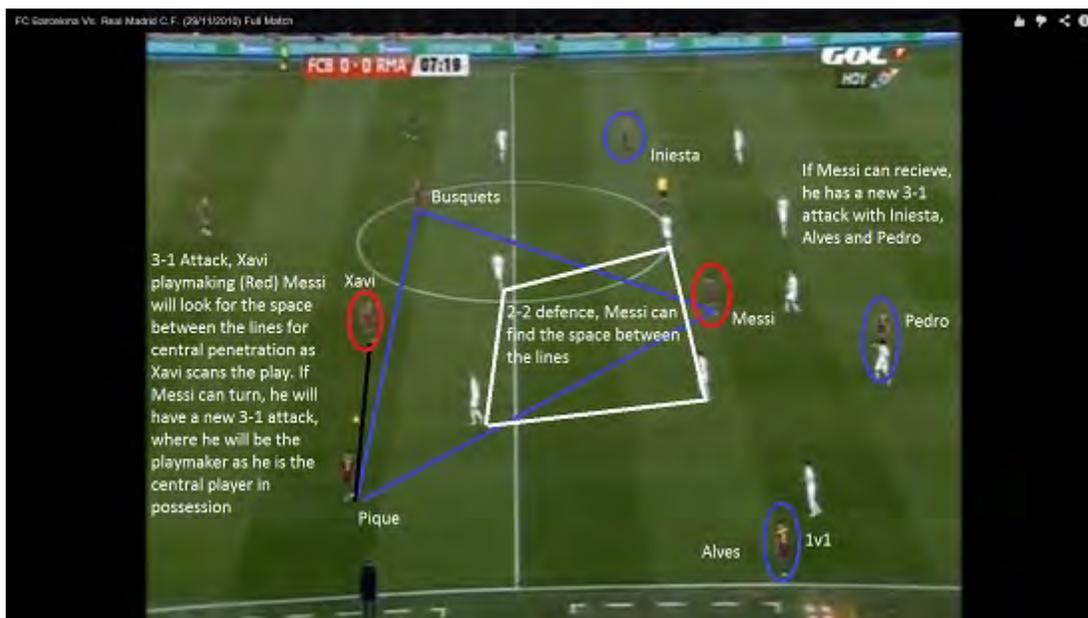
As Alves scans the play, the covering defender decides to move out and stay closer to Xavi, opening up the space which Pedro is pointing to. As the zone behind the line of pressure isn't being covered, Messi can arc behind his marker into the zone left by the covering defender, if the pass can be passed through the line of pressure. Iniesta take an interesting position between the lines – he is positioned in an area where the far side centre back should be in close proximity should he receive, while the full back is wary of the position of Villa on the far side.



As Alves can find a passing lane behind the line of pressure, Messi makes the blindside run into the empty zone left by the covering defender who wants to move with Xavi. If Iniesta was to receive, Barcelona would again have a 4-in-a-line scenario with Villa, Iniesta, Xavi and Messi all able to run from deep and unmarked, drawing out an opponent to press, opening up space for penetration.

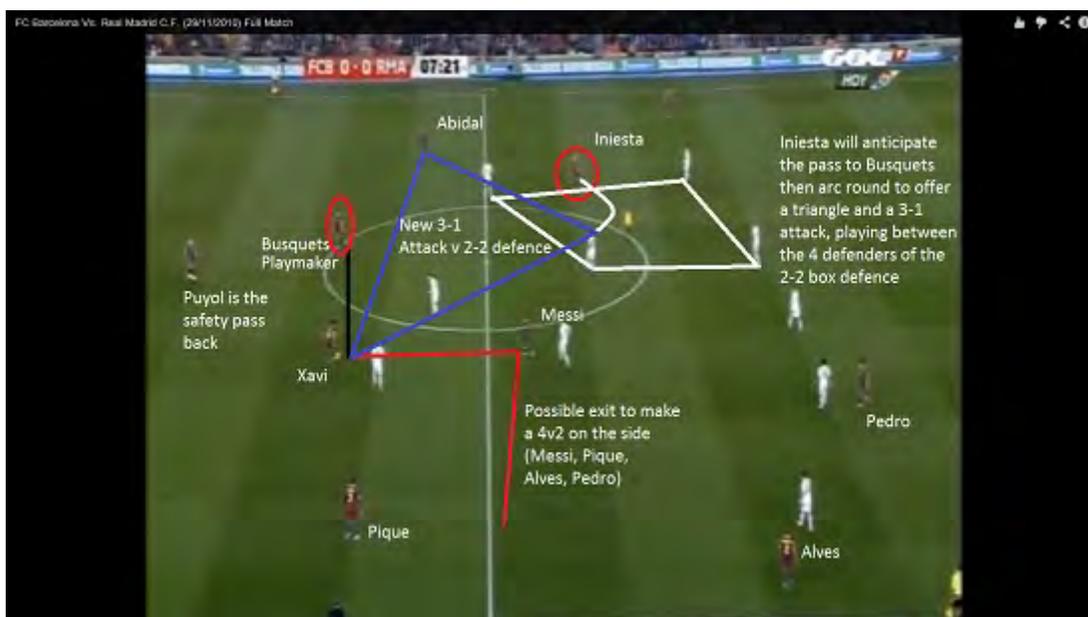
Free space, movement without the ball from Messi but the main mistake by Madrid in this situation, is the lack of pressure to the ball allowing much time and space to Alvé's to look, think and decide. Although one of the premises in the Futsal is that the ball must be pressed always to not let the opponent think. The Barcelona and Spain apply that premise very effectively when pressed but not forced into making an action with the ball.

3-1 attack v 2-2 defence in central midfield



As Pique is in possession, Alves pushes forward but is tracked back by Di Maria. This leaves Real Madrid with a 2-2 box defence v a 3-1 attack of Pique, Xavi (playmaker), Busquets and Messi (Target Man, Playmaker in 2nd phase).

As Xavi scans the play, Messi drops away from Pepe and between the lines, and into the zone between the 4 defenders, making easy penetration. Messi can initiate a new attack from this position if he turns and attacks the defence in a new 3-1 attack with Iniesta, Alves and Pedro.



As Messi drops deep, Alonso plays behind him to stop him from turning, but he could have an option to find Pique and initiate a 4v3 on the side with Pique, Pedro and Alves. Instead the ball

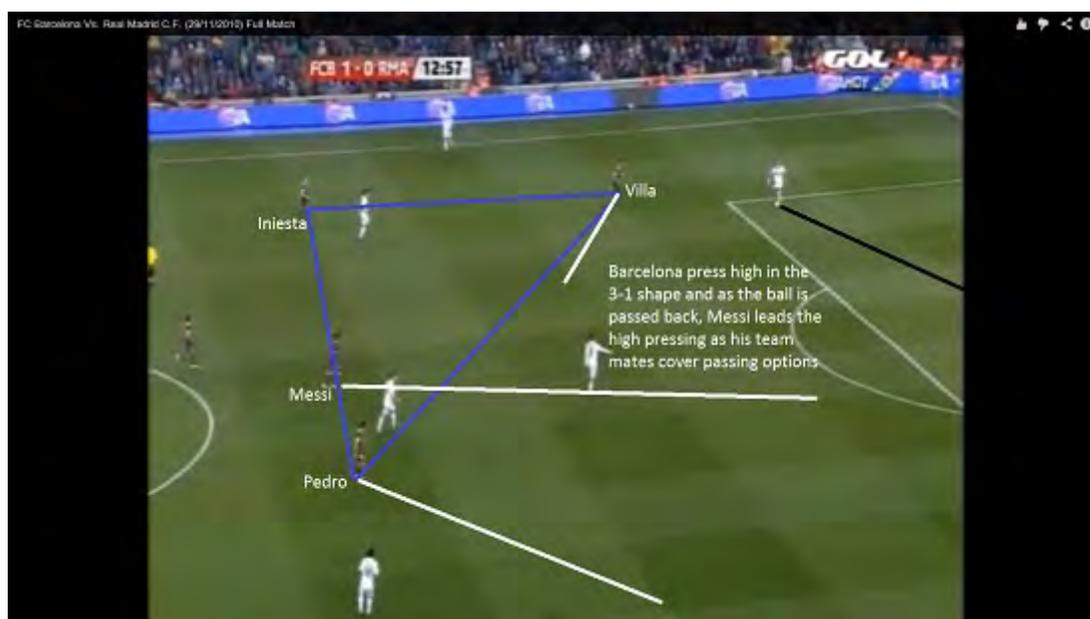
is passed into Busquets who has a new 3-1 attack with Xavi, Abidal and Iniesta who occupies the space between the new 2-2 Real Madrid defence.

Barcelona Defending Scenarios

Barcelona in the Rijkaard-Guardiola era took Futsal/Basketball tactics to a new level in football, especially Barcelona's counter-pressure tactics when the ball was lost – the initial block of players within 15m-20m of the ball would try to win the ball back within 6 seconds, while the back 4 would try to regroup (if the full backs weren't close enough to press or defend behind the pressure zone. In Futsal, this is a common feature of play, counter-pressing to regain possession or slow down an attack. Teams also play counter-pressure with a foul after 6 seconds to stop the potential attack after the zone of pressure is by-passed, so a tactical foul inside the opposition half is a good tactic to use when the counter-press is ineffective.

In a small Futsal field, counter-pressing is very effective, especially when a team uses a flying goalkeeper (a play maker plays with gloves on but plays around the half way line, to make a 5v4 scenario when chasing a goal), as if there is no pressure, a shot can be taken from where the ball was won, and a goal can be scored into the empty net.

High Pressure Defending in a 3-1 Formation

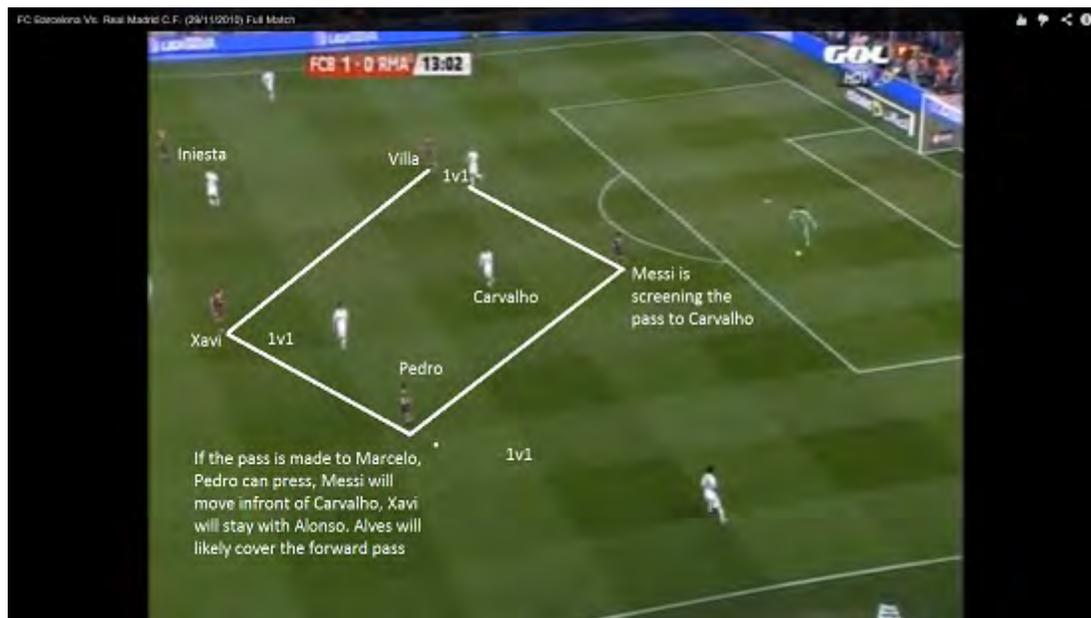


Real Madrid take a throw-in, and Villa presses close to Pepe to block the passing lanes to the same side, both forward and wide. Pepe passes to Casillas and this triggers Barcelona to shift into a 1-2-1 defensive shape, with Xavi covering behind, Villa tucking inside and Pedro moving wide as Messi presses and occupies the space in front of the easy passing lanes into midfield.

As we said before, the pressure is essential to the ball when defending; the second part of this pressure is to close the direct and comfortable passing lanes. The Barcelona high defense is based on these rules or premises, pressure to the ball and close the closest direct passing

lanes not afraid because they have confidence in that defense, believe in it; they worked for years on this system, and have a collective defensive concept, intelligent (read and anticipate the opponent's pass) and make rational.

Defending in a 1-2-1 defensive shape



As Messi presses high, Villa and Pedro adjust their positions. Messi screens the pass into Carvalho, Pedro is within pressing distance of the full back, Villa is marking Pepe while Xavi is 1v1 with Alonso.

Squeezing the play on the side to regain possession – Rondo Scenario



Iniesta is in possession and is forced to turn back into trouble, where Real Madrid win possession. They have 5 players v 2 in the zone when it is won, but instantly, Busquets and Abidal squeeze the space and make it a 4v5 and play man-man, leaving 1 player free but blocking the passing lane.



As a loose pass is played, Abidal makes the interception and regains possession. If Real Madrid had been able to pass into the free player, Busquets would've likely pressed the ball, but with the possibility of doubling up with Messi, trying to force play back towards Villa and win possession.

Again we see the ball pressure, rational space occupation and control of the passing lanes, and all this occurs in a safe area because Barcelona ambition and philosophy is getting the ball back quickly. Also this image is very relevant to the Futsal to Football transition, it's like a rondo, the most worked and trained exercise at La Masia and in Futsal. As both offensively and defensively (this case) players are experts at reading those short passing situations or small spaces and in this case it may be helpful for Iniesta to press better or receive with the sole of his foot for instant control.

Defending as a 3-1 block to protect the defence and stop forward passes



Barcelona likes to pass through teams centrally when possible, preferably when the opponent is close. The reason for this is because they like to draw multiple players to the ball then open up play into the spaces they have created and looking for penetration to goal in 2v1 and 3v2 scenarios.

To Counter this, Real Madrid have 3 players screening the area they could play forward into, and instead Barcelona use the spaces created by the narrow 3-1 defence to play diagonally across the field into Iniesta who is between the lines, who can attack 2v1 with Villa on the side.

Defending as a 1-2-1 block on the side



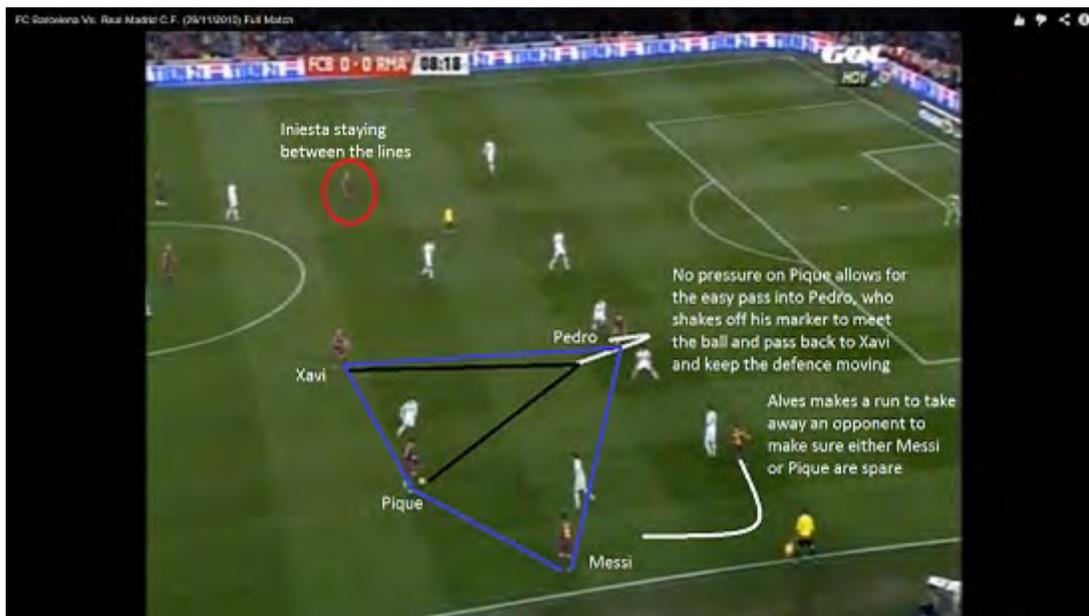
Ronaldo is in possession on the right in an area where he can cross, so Abidal presses close with Puyol covering Ronaldo's strong side to help stop the cross, Iniesta covering the area where he can cut inside and continue the attack, with Busquets filling the space behind and marking Ozil for a 4v2.

Defending against an overload on the side – 1-2-1 defence covers all areas



Here, Pique is the free player and has advanced forward unopposed. This allows Alves to push high and force the full back to stay in position, allowing Pedro and Messi to rotate positions, and making their markers uncomfortable with the movement around them. Pedro's position behind

the eye line of his marker means that at some point, he will not be looking at the play in front, trying to find Pedro.



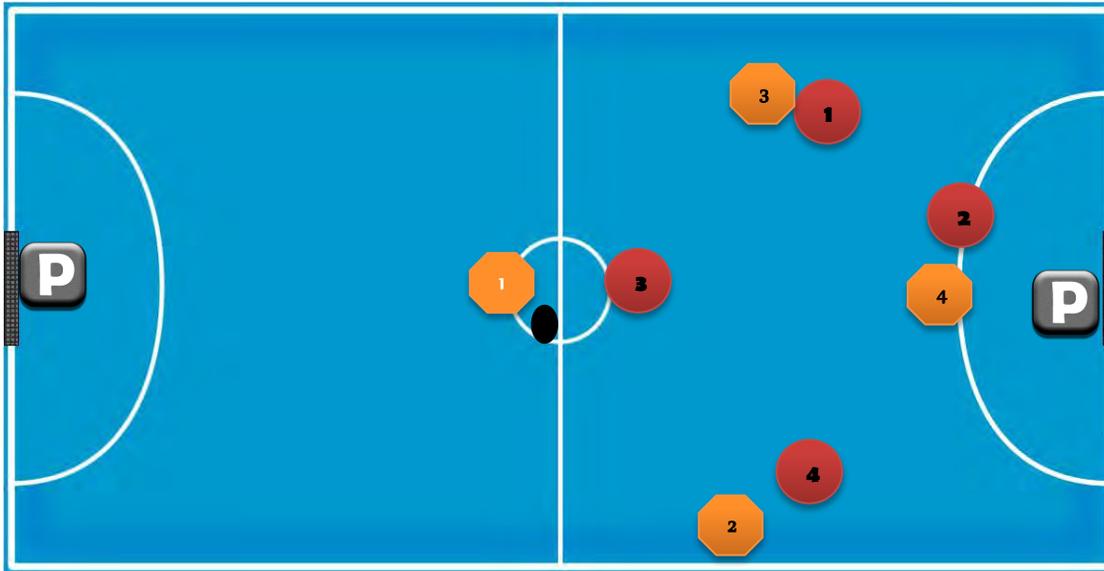
As Pedro moves behind, his marker looks away from the ball, giving Pedro a little advantage when dropping in for the pass. Messi pulling wider as Alves moves forward opens up the space for the passing lane into Pedro, and out to Xavi, which opens up a passing lane from Xavi to Iniesta.

What we can see from this one game between Barcelona v Real Madrid, that although an 11v11 match is 22 players, there may only be a 3v3,4v4 or 5v5 scenario happening at any one time on the field, which is where having a background in the reduced space, thus forcing players to become more technically gifted, being calm under pressure in tight spaces, becoming more adept at anticipating the outcome of a scenario and also developing faster decision making abilities, which enhance the ability to play football at a higher level than without the background in Futsal.

The flair players of Brazil, and the technical and intelligent players of Barcelona and Real Madrid (as well as countless other players across the world with a background in Futsal who have flair, technique and intelligence) show that being able to control a small area of the field at any time, can help you prepare better for success on the large field, as when the spaces to play in are reduced, only the best players can succeed in these situations, as Spain and Barcelona from 2008-2012 have proved.

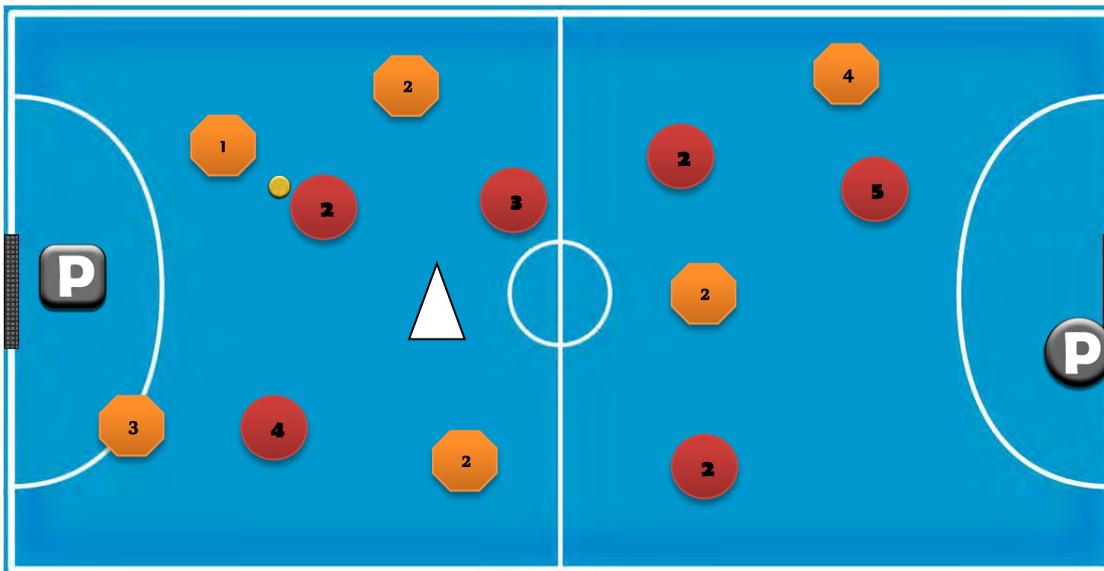
Eleven Futsal Exercises that Translate to Soccer

EXERCISE 1



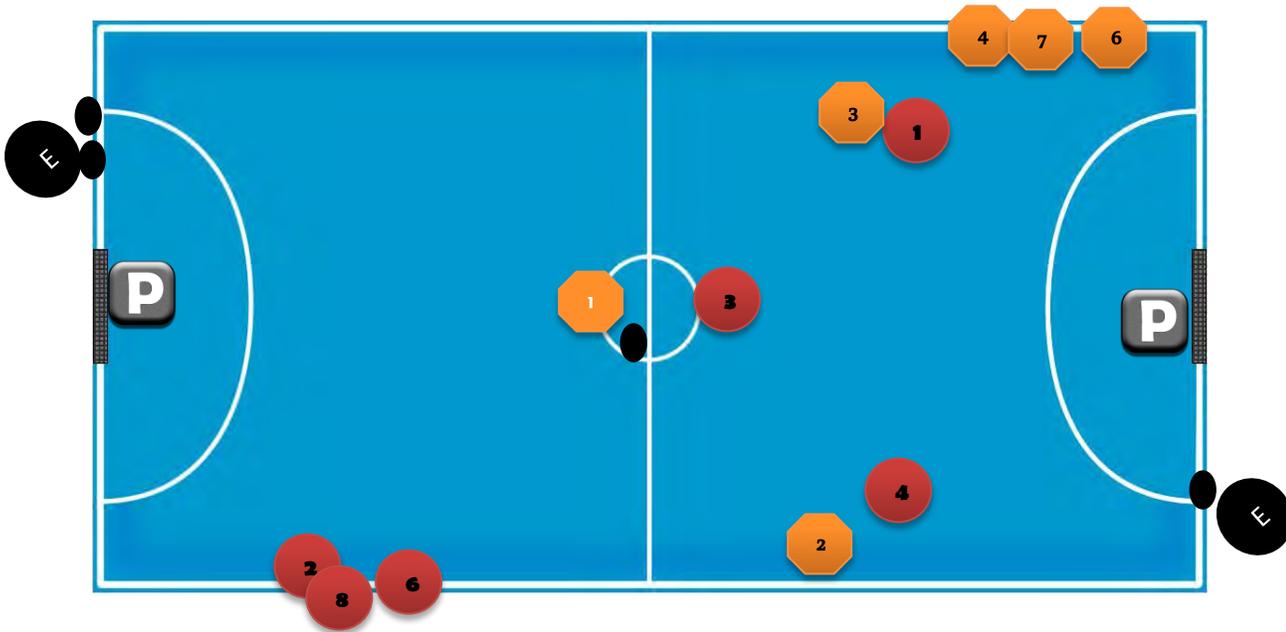
5 V 5 where the goal is only valid if it is scored with the weak foot of the player and it need to be scored from outside of the goal zone.

EXERCISE 2



Posesion game where one player (triangle) tries to touch one of the players of the team with the ball to get points. When he gets 5-8 points he goes to one team to play and the coach choose another "triangle one"

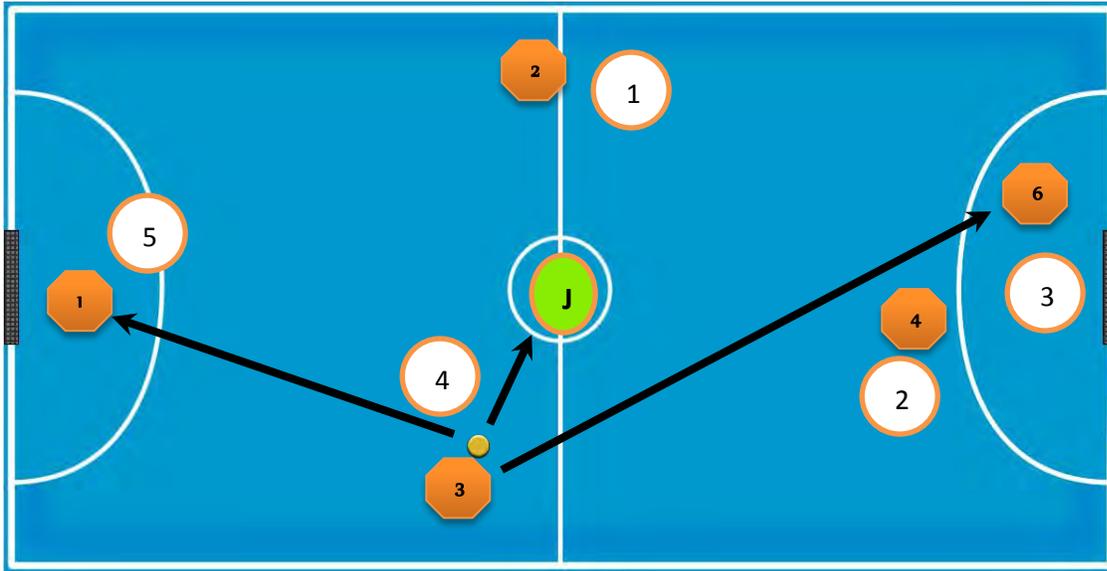
EXERCISE 3



3 v 3, game limited to 3 touches and one to score. 3 minutes work

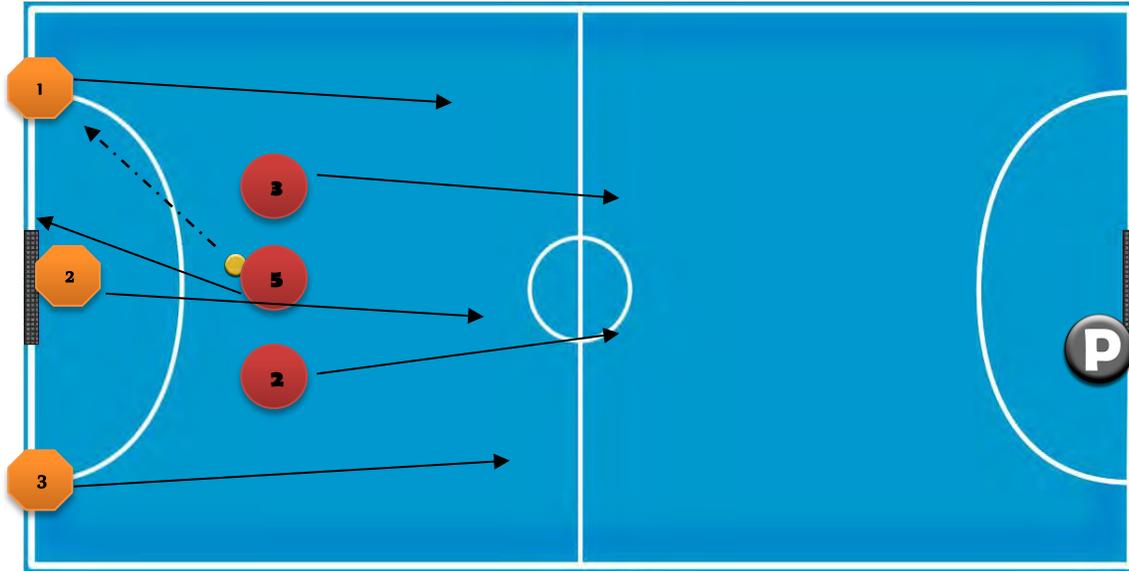
The coach has a whistle, when he decides to whistles the ball inside goes out and a new ball goes in, we work on reaction and speed of transition.

EXERCISE 5



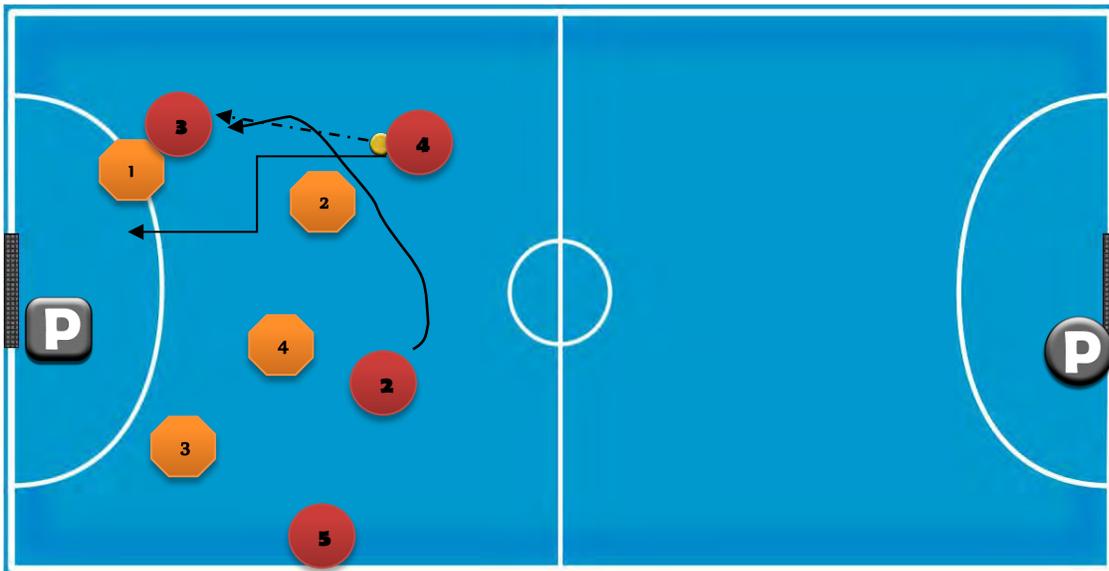
5 v 5 + J: We set three working areas, the central circle and penalty areas. The goal is to pass the ball to J (joker) or teammates in the area. This works on quick ball movement, feints, finding space (in attack) and pressure the ball and close passing lines (on defense).

EXERCISE 6



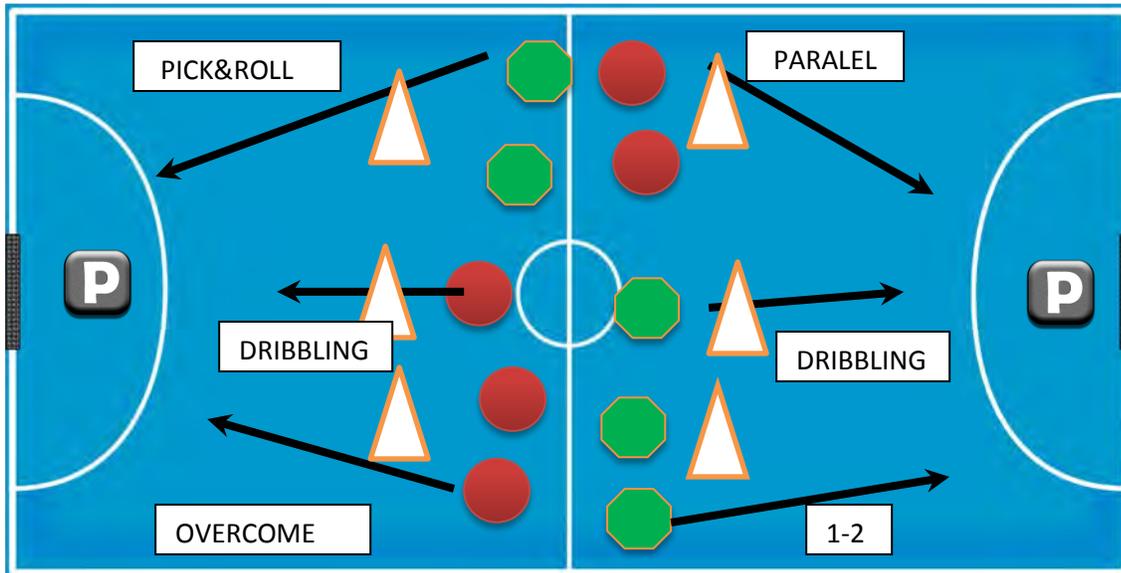
Offensive and defensive transitions. One player passes the ball to one of the players on the base line and goes to touch the goal before defending, the players with the ball attack quickly 3 v 2 before the 3rd defender has a chance to recover.

EXERCISE 7



This exercise works an offensive movement. "Input second" ball on the right wing player n4-circle, n4 who passes to player n3 and moves and feints, then player n2-circle makes a move approach to Player n3 for finding a shot on goal or pass to the far post (where player n4 reaches). Player n5 for coverage or defensive balance.

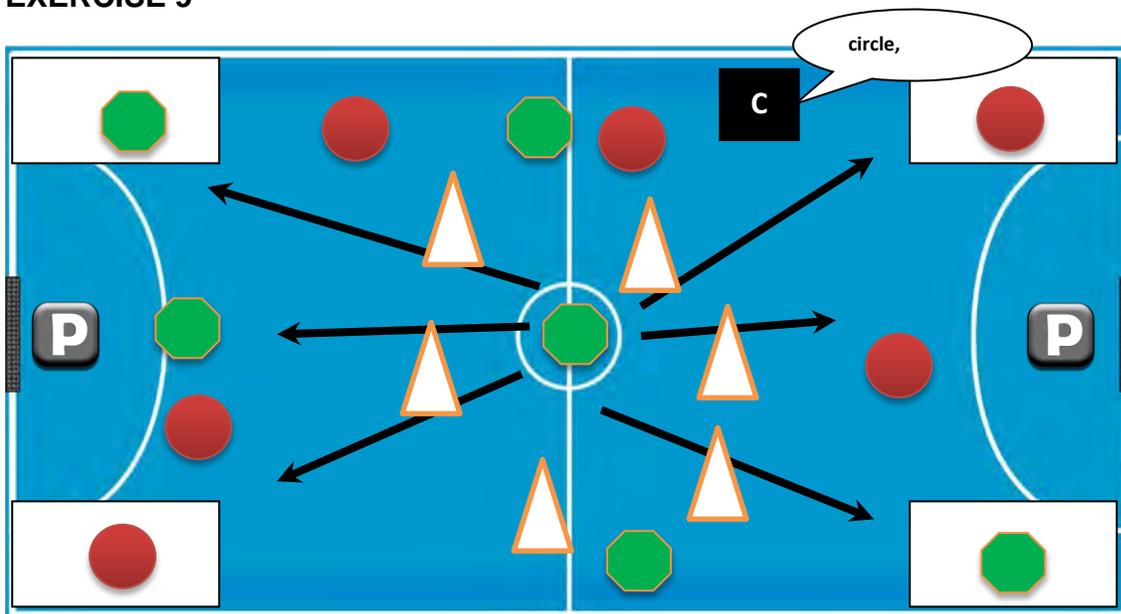
EXERCISE 8



12 PLAYERS

Two 3 v 2's and two 2 v 1's. The players work for 3 minutes. They make in each post the movement said and shoot. The return to the initial position is passing the ball on air.

EXERCISE 9

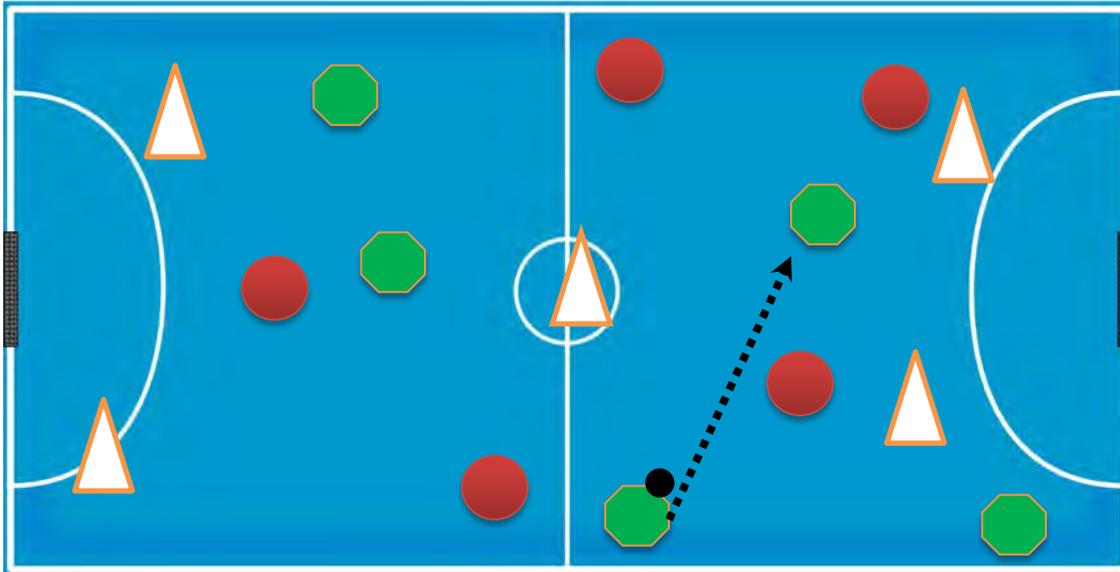


14 PLAYERS

One player in the middle, he has to listen to the coach to follow his instructions. One of the goalkeepers passes the player in the middle the ball and at that

moment the coach will say “circle” or “hexagon” and the player has to pass in 2 touches to the right option.

EXERCISE 10

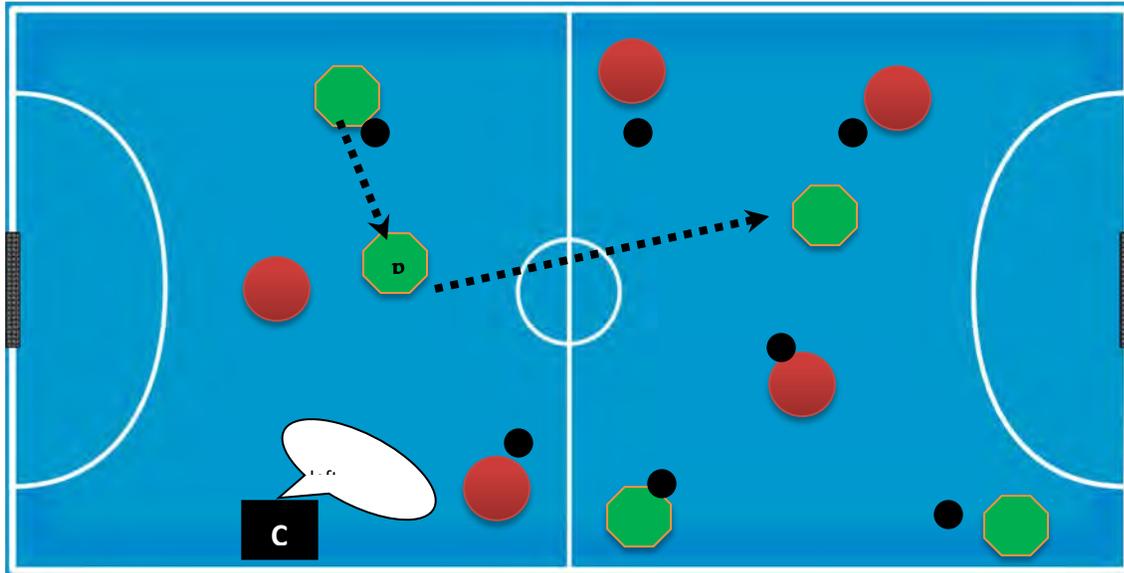


10 PLAYERS, 2 teams, passing game, they need to complete 10 passes which is worth one point. After the 10 passes they can hit the cones, each cone is one more point.

Options:

- one touch, two touches, either one touch or two but after two touches it is obliged to make one touch

EXERCISE 11



10 PLAYERS

One player (P) is given a ball and he has to listen to the coach and follow his instructions (regarding the kind of pass he has to make, left foot, parallel, one touch, short, etc...) and make the pass to one of the players without the ball except the one who has passed to him.

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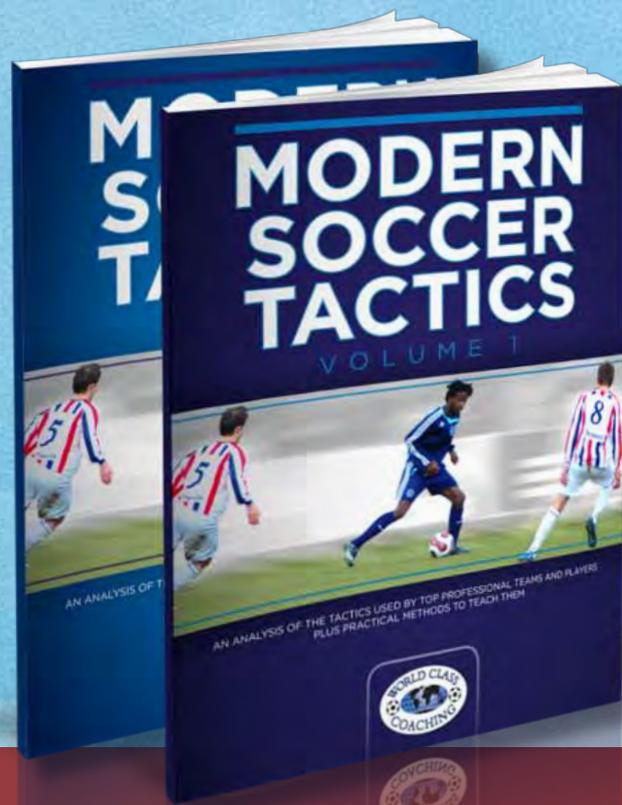
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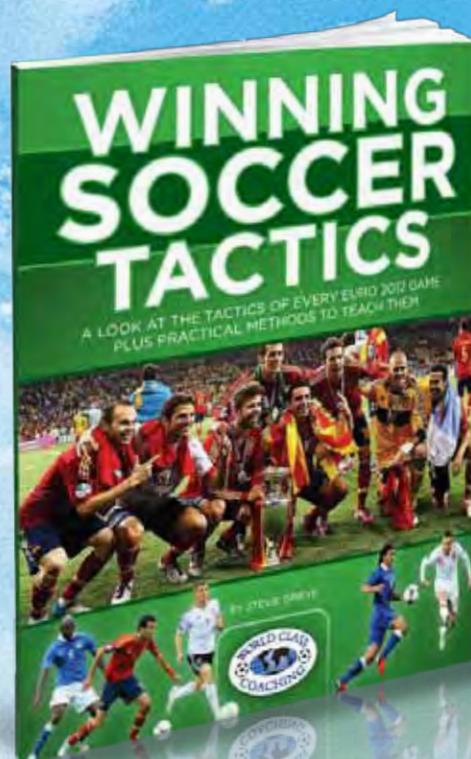
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